Talk

Angela 2 — Week 1, Day 4, Session 2 — 68 minutes

Summary: Russell points toward the most basic sense of being, closer than the skin, hard to speak, since language needs subjects and objects. Embodiment and groundedness are doorways, not the end. Presence opens a self-illuminating spaciousness. People share missing a child, the pain of striving, and a wish for trust, and he meets each without making the path a goal.

The most basic sense

[Russell:] Morning once again.

You want to be — yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Organize so that you're where you want to be. Yeah, you go exactly where you want to be.

Well, I can always pass the microphone over to you. Take over.

So, I want to speak to something, and then I'll open space for you to ask or share experience. If people want to share something about last night, that's open, or anything else.

What I want to speak toward is really hard to speak toward. It's kind of the classic in Zen, when they talk about a finger pointing to the moon. The words are the finger, and I don't want you focusing on my finger. I want you intuiting the moon.

And it's difficult, because it's like we're a collection of fish, and we're going to discuss water. It's so ever-present, it's really hard to have a real sense of this water, and yet it's the closest thing to us. How do we speak about it?

So I want to just point toward what I mentioned in the sitting this morning. This most basic sense of being alive. We could say the most basic sense of being. I could say the most basic sense. We could say being.

We sometimes talk about the sense of self, but even that is too solid. So sometimes you'll hear me use a word, the sense of selfing. That there's a process going on, that something becomes awake to something.

We are the instancing of life coming awake to itself. We are the place that occurs in which living, after millions of years, or billions of years if we look at the time of the universe, has been evolving toward this rare capacity for that which is here to know that it is here.

And that is occurring through us. And if we could really get that, we would be awed by the capacity to know that we're alive, and to be able to sense it, and to have a response to green, and to have what appreciation feels like, or what hurt feels like, or to be able to be conscious of all of that. It has been billions of years of unfolding, if we want to take that story of the universe.

Closer than the skin

[Russell:] So, coming to this most basic — how one knows they're sitting on this cushion. Of course it's not only when you're sitting on a cushion. It's any moment of your life.

But what's brilliant about the cushion technology, about the chair technology, or this whole setup, is that we minimize the variables. It's like a good scientific experiment. You've got to minimize variables. You can't have too many things going on at the same time.

So when you're out interacting with people, and driving your cars, and talking, and watching shows, and there's so much going on, it's very difficult at first to get to the core, the most basic sense of beingness. So we create this stripped-down situation where you're sitting there, and whatever occurs, after a while you get clear that whatever is added to the moment of just being here is something you're creating, something your history is creating.

As that gets seen through, we get to experience what is here through all conditions. What doesn't change?

We can find something that is truly reliable within all the changes that are occurring always. And it's closer than our skin.

And it's so hard to talk effectively about, because in language we need to create subjects and objects, and thises and thaters. So I can just point toward.

Under the under

[Russell:] When we're sitting here, it's this tremendous opportunity for grace to occur. And what grace looks like in this situation is — if I'm not the historical Russell, if I'm not a man, if I'm not fifty-nine years old, if I'm not a husband and a father, if I'm not this body, and I'm not these thoughts, and I'm not these feelings, and I'm not this breath, and I'm not the coolness in my fingers, and I'm not the head shaking, and I'm not any of that — what is there?

What is under the under? What is the bottom of the bottom? And how can we rest in that?

And have such confidence in that, that no one could ever take it away from you. That you could sit in front of Buddha, or Christ, or your father, whoever is the one that hangs over your head, and they could not take it away from you. That you are safe in this place that exists before all these other conditions. That you can actually rest in — hard to find words — the unconditioned, as your indivisible connection to source. Your sourceness. Your selfness. Your beingness. Your authenticity.

Authenticity — get the "your."

And confidence in what can be called the ground of being. One then can interact with all the thises and thaters, all the ups and the downs, all the losses and the fulfillments. That doesn't stop. That goes on. That's the dance. But it's experienced fundamentally different. It's not blank, or something. It's not neutral in the sense that it doesn't move. It has movement in it.

But there's a certain — and this is where language really breaks down — certain kind of just okayness about it all. Trust in it. And non-divisibility in it. Non-isolation. Non-separation.

So when I invite you to drop down, down, down, it's using embodiment as a doorway. This quality we call presence. We could say presence is the doorway to your beingness. In other words, you

have to be here first, but even being here isn't enough. Being here, then there's a letting go of thought, of feeling. It's a letting go into this open moment.

And so we can say that presence is the door, embodiment is the key, in the sense that by getting right here, by dropping down, by following to the end of that exhale, there might be an opening for maybe at first a hundredth of a second, or a tenth of a second, or a second or two, where there's a sense of spaciousness.

It's what in the tradition was called emptiness, but that sounds dark, and sounds unappealing for many modern people. So spaciousness somehow touches the same ground, as effectively. There's a sense of spaciousness. Flow, which means a kind of floatingness. Spacious.

So the embodiment is a key to going through that door. But it's not the end point. We want to move beyond embodiment, but it's a beautiful vehicle to bring us into the vastness of being, into the ground of being, or the groundlessness of being.

Each time I say something, the Zen master wants to wash my mouth out. The Zen master living in there — it wasn't right either. You're just confusing the people. Stop it.

[Participant 1:] You can't find any other ways of describing it, because it addresses different people in the world as well.

[Russell:] Right, exactly. Yeah. That's the attempt.

Gravitation

[Russell:] And I want to make a rather remarkable connection to Moshe Feldenkrais, and to the work of embodiment.

There was an important influence on Moshe. I always forget — Paul Schilder. Okay, and he was a neurologist. Oh, beautiful, how funny. Oh, that's beautiful. Yeah. She was amazing.

So, through studying the brain injuries of war veterans, and what happened to the sense of identity, we could say, what he began to hypothesize about was that proprioception — the proprioceptive sense, the sense of weight, the sense of pressure, the sense of the joints, the sense of this body on this spot — is the ground of the fundamental sense of self.

And when you think about Moshe Feldenkrais, who has one of the premier titles to a book of all time, Body and Mature Behavior — but it's the subtitle that's so cool. A study of gravitation, sex, and anxiety.

Why does somebody, writing the kind of thesis of their life, begin with gravitation?

Well, there's something so fundamental about: I'm here, on this spot. Not in these thoughts. Not in these memories. Not first. First, I'm here. I'm here.

And as I was saying before, this brings us to a doorway. Eventually we're actually free from the sense of weight. That's not the end point. Sense of weight is a reliable returning point, a reliable way to kind of locate the self that we can work with. But we go beyond that. The body itself is passing.

So this movement of life becoming conscious of itself — as we sit here, and we drop down, and we don't fight the thoughts or the feelings, we notice them.

What mindfulness melts into

[Russell:] But I have trouble with even the most popular word in this world these days: mindfulness.

Mindfulness is wonderful. It's a basic practice of the Buddha. It's great, so let me get that on the table. It's not a criticism of mindfulness.

And what I see so often is a separation as a kind of end point. A kind of subtle validation of the meditator having an object of experience. Now that's a good step. So we don't want to get rid of that.

But you notice I don't use that language very often, because I'm pointing towards something that mindfulness melts into, we could say.

But it's not like it's just — let me pause there. This is a hard edge here, and I love being on it.

So I want to give you an image. And again, some of this will not — when this sounds really confusing, don't struggle at it. If it's important, it'll come back. Some of these images will work for some.

When we say there isn't something knowing something, but that when you drop into this basic sense of being, there is the sense of spaciousness — but what experiences the spaciousness?

And we were saying yesterday, we were looking at how experiencing is growing. I was talking about how it has these elements: the thinking, the feeling, the sensing. And those are — I'm dividing something up that's really whole. Well, even giving those labels is already a division.

So how can we get even more subtle than that and say, well, if there is no knower and there are no divisions, then how is anything known?

I get the spaciousness, but then it's just what it's been for millions — billions of years, which is unconsciousness living in spaciousness. Molecules floating around in this vast open void. And nothing knows that it's there.

[Participant 2:] Let's stay with that. I know how we know. How do I know that? Why isn't it? It is consciousness. It's not a knowing consciousness. It is a not-knowing of itself, is my understanding.

[Russell:] And you can hold that as a question. It's a good question.

The self-illuminated jewel

[Russell:] So, there are these objects, molecules, and in some development these elements begin to form what we've come to call living cells. And I think it's a pretty good guess that these amoebas and first one-cell organisms are probably not knowing that they are there.

And they grow, and they form communities, and they form beings, and then eventually plant life, animal life, go through the whole series. And capacities grow as this brain develops. And then there is this capacity for — we could say something knowing something. Something knowing that. In Christ's language, his definition of awareness is knowing that you know. It's the self-reflective capacity, the looking back upon, which is quite similar to what Buddha talked about in terms of turning the light around.

So when we have this open space, we can speak of it as — a beautiful phrase that I got from a Zen teacher a long time ago. I mean from the classic literature in Zen. It's the self-illuminated jewel. That it's lit from the inside.

It's not that it's lit — mindfulness is lighting it from the outside, which is good. But when we enter that space, it's lit up from within.

It has this quality, or this non-quality, because it doesn't really feel like a quality. If we had to give words for it, we would say, well, there's spaciousness here, and there's what I call light, or knowingness. But there's no sense of something knowing something. It's that it's self-illuminating. It's knowing itself from the inside.

And it rests in — if we were going to give it qualities, the closest we can give it is spaciousness. Light. Light meaning it knows that it knows. It's alive to itself.

Knows that it knows. It's alive to itself.

And in those moments, later we can reflect upon it, label the experience, we can talk about it. But within the experience, it has no labels. It has no judgment, actually. It's free of that.

What usually takes one out of that experience is some sort of commentary about it. Jumps in.

Two places for the ground

[Russell:] So one of the things we are exploring here is coming onto this very spot. This emphasis on groundedness has at least two really important places in the embodied life work.

The first is very practical, everyday life. This is the most substantial way of finding yourself in your everyday life. The most substantial — substantial means it has the most earth quality, these bones. And it's held in this emphasis on the skeleton, on these bones. Feeling: I am here on this spot.

I can have all these thoughts, all these feelings, and underneath that — under our under, our down, our connection to this earth — is what grounds us in the moment.

So when we see that all that we're looking for, all those qualities you were working with yesterday, the qualities you want to be inviting, all those soul qualities, they all come to fruition in the soil of presence. One needs to be present.

It's like the old churches, and the bingo halls. They would have on the sign on the wall: must be present in order to win.

It's out of presence that these qualities root, that they come forward.

So, to find oneself here on this spot, amidst the turmoil of everyday life, amidst the demands, amidst the challenges, one keeps returning to the spot. So practicing returning to the ground in the course of our living is what we emphasize at first. What I encourage you to emphasize at first. Because once that becomes more and more spontaneous, once through practice you are in more and more diverse, chaotic situations, yet your ground is there — that you've actually developed something under yourself, that you feel supported.

In these very demanding, fast — you know, some of us have kids, some of us, it goes really quick, and things are going on, and there are so many demands often calling our attention at the same

time, that we feel pulled very often, pulled by the needs of others. And there's a sense of all that pulling, pulling us away from our ground.

And so this is a very good place to stop. I talked about two.

So the first is this very practical practice of groundedness as a basis for functioning in everyday life. It's more effective functioning in everyday life.

The second is what I was talking about before. To feel supported enough to drop into the space. To have enough confidence in the ground that you can risk dropping into that open space.

So it's the same. It's like the turning point for both our everyday living, in relationship, in the demands of life, and for our deepening into the most essential quality of being, or non-quality.

Just that basic sense of being alive. And that somehow is enough, and complete, and whole, and nothing is needed. One knows there's no way to improve upon it.

It's the only way that I know to deeply, deeply rest.

Yes, no, and not sure

[Russell:] Just let that resonate. That's enough words about it for now.

Just see where in your body you get a yes. That goes, yes. Something in you knows this is true. Where you get a no — I don't know about that. Where you get a no, or where you get an I'm not sure.

And feel the different response, and don't push any of those away. You want to listen, in a bodily way, to how the organism, or the whole self, responds.

Sometimes things just go, yes. Sometimes they go, no. Sometimes it's more, I'm not sure, or that seems close, but you want to listen more.

Again, I am here not giving you an ideology, but wanting to stimulate your inquiry.

Work your way through this, taking what's helpful and leaving what feels like it's not so helpful.

[Silence 37 seconds]

[Russell:] Open to anything you'd like to look at right now. Could be connected to what I've been saying. Could be connected to something else.

Please.

Missing him

[Participant 3:] Thank you for those words. It was exactly what I needed this morning. I've been really struggling with being here, and missing my boy.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 3:] This morning it was really hard.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 3:] And — I broke the — I'm not speaking well. I called them right before class, and it was so perfect, because they had just come out of the Sunday morning Buddhist group, where

I could hear all the chaos. The kids — there's like twenty-five children running around, and my husband sounds exhausted. And I can feel myself when I'm in that space. And I know the good intentions of the people who are there, practicing mindfulness. Really, that's kind of the focus of that teacher. And it's not enough. I have to — and I know that's what I'm here for. I'm here to practice.

It's not easy. It's really not easy.

[Participant 4:] We have some tissues.

[Russell:] Oh, we've got some here.

[Participant 3:] It's really not easy.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 3:] And there's just this — yeah. Sitting this morning, trying to.

Trying to differentiate internally between my true self and my conditioned self. The conditioned self that feels this — you have all this responsibility. And then my mind goes, well, but you have this responsibility. So it's not like I'm making that up.

But if I'm operating from my conditioned self, day to day, with my son and my husband, it's not who I want to be. It's not what I want to do.

[Russell:] Take a moment to feel all of that. I'm really touched by this inner commitment. That there's a way you want to be with yourself, with them, that is connected to more than your reactivity.

Does that feel right?

Because I want to say, we do have our conditioned self, and that's beautiful and wonderful, and I never want you to be other than herself, with all that she has behind her. Not to be some other ideal mother, but to be herself.

And there's a way in which the conditioning can be in harmony with our living, and when it's not, how that becomes the edge of our learning. Because we somehow got disconnected from the unconditioned that is feeding into that conditioned self.

[Participant 3:] Yeah. And I feel like I lived much more closely to that source, actually. Being a mother is the hardest thing I've ever done.

[Russell:] Yeah. A lot of nods around the room.

[Participant 3:] Just really paradoxical, how this little being that you love so much can bring out so much of this.

[Russell:] Oh, yeah. Yeah.

[Participant 3:] But I feel, in my body, when I hear — really quiet.

[Russell:] Yeah. Yeah.

And to really feel, right now, the ground is here. You can feel your bottom. Your right foot is right there. Left knee is on the floor. And this is actually very much a classic Avalokiteshvara pose that you're in.

Avalokiteshvara is this bodhisattva of compassion, often depicted in feminine form. Taking care of the world.

Just seeing the difference right here. And I want you to feel that. I want to invite you to feel that as a resource. That this sitting you have here, that has a lot of feeling — so we don't have to have images that when I'm really connected, I don't have emotion — has a lot of feeling, and has a lot of presence. And clear direction.

Be less reactive, and more present. Those words.

A thousand mistakes

[Russell:] Okay, can you say one more thing? Are you able for one more thing?

I want to say — of course I'm speaking to everyone — I want to say how important I find it is to just assume I'm going to make a thousand mistakes a day. That that's the beginning of my day.

In other words, one of the things that makes the path so painful are our images of who we should be, want to be, think we could be. It kind of doubles our pain. Because we have the pain of the actual moment, when our voice was not what we wanted it to be, that feeling. But then we add — we kind of put that to the power of ten, with all these images of divineness, and pure, and what we should be, and the perfect mother, and we're injuring them, all that stuff.

And all of a sudden it's like this, where — oh. Hello there, to the one in here. Hello there. I'm with you. It was a hard one.

And so I want you to know the place in you that is unconditionally warm-hearted towards the one who's struggling. She's your best friend. She's your son's best friend. She's your husband's best friend.

Bring it into practice and see. These things are testable.

Thank you.

The curtain drawn back

[Russell:] That was a nice moment there. Tell me about that moment.

[Participant 5:] That was — yeah, intention. I think you asked for something we want.

So I started with this intention of just wanting more peace. A desire for peace. And I've been wanting that for a while. And when we did the resource, I just saw how much — what's helping me while I'm working.

Let me just — the peace, and this huge problem or conflict. I'm doing so well with it, and I've achieved so much. Just okayness with it. And it was so — I mean, I haven't seen that, and you talked about that the day before. So it was so nice to have that curtain sort of drawn back, and be able to see it.

[Russell:] Yeah, let's go slow here. I don't want to skip over this. It's nice, but it's more than nice, and I want you to really let it in, because that touched you. To be able to really draw that curtain back and see: oh, I've been dealing with a really difficult circumstance, and some appreciation.

[Participant 5:] Yeah. And then last night was just a continuation of that unfolding, or just — yeah, just appreciation.

I'm doing what — just doing what I do.

[Russell:] Yes, yes, yes.

Not a goal

[Participant 6:] Well, it's funny. I was aware of what I could say yes to, in terms of your caring, the embodiment piece, and the groundedness. That sort of dimension. It's been just a really important part of how I know I'm alive, and how to be in the world in a way that keeps me a little more centered.

But the other piece, around that sense of spaciousness and consciousness — I get caught up in that teaching, and other teachings, of whether that's enlightenment or all that. It sounds like there's this striving to join, or be living out of, this unity consciousness. But to me, I kind of believe that that probably happens when we die, but I'm not sure that's intended for our life. So I have some doubts about that.

I don't want to strive for that sense of unity. People seek that unity with psychedelic drugs, and deep meditations, and monastic life. And there's all this effort — how do I find this water that I'm in? And how do I know I'm in it all the time?

For me, striving for that feels like I'm not honoring my own life. And so I just struggle. That's where I kind of come up. And maybe I'm not understanding how you're sharing, but anyway, those are some of the struggles that I have.

So where does that live in me, and how do I find it in a way that becomes more meaningful, and less of a goal? It is what it is. So it's here. And I just trust that it's here. And I don't have to work hard doing it, or finding it. Or if I do, I feel like it won't happen.

[Russell:] Yeah, I'm with you. That's why I call it resting.

[Participant 6:] You hear striving. Well, it feels like I need to get somewhere. Sometimes I hear it that way. I'm not saying you said it. It kind of feels like I should be making progress. So I get a different kind of model, I guess. I need to find different language to look at consciousness, or awareness, or whatever language we're using, to honor that.

[Russell:] Yeah, yeah. Thank you. That's really important, because it's so challenging to have a direction that doesn't become a goal. So challenging to have a direction that doesn't become our history of striving.

And then, I'm very interested in when it's possible for suffering to decrease. That attracts me. And when it's possible to help others struggle less, that attracts me. And when it becomes possible for people to feel the kind of trust you're talking about.

And basically, without making it a goal, having the experience that — and here words will break down, and a part of our mind will turn it into this and that, and a goal, and stuff. I don't know how to speak about it for that not to happen.

That love becomes the ground out of which we're living. And that's a tricky word to use, because everybody has all their own stuff about that. But the things we can point toward are things like a basic sense of trust.

When I say love, I don't mean some sort of disconnected walk-around. A basic — let me say it this way. There is so much within every one of our cells that has been conditioned toward self-protection, that has been conditioned toward fear. Fear, meaning the universe is hostile and I've got to keep it out.

How we can honor that — to protect life is to see certain things as harmful — and have the ground of ourselves be one of, call it caring, call it trust, call it warmheartedness, call it radiance.

How to encourage that unfolding without falling into making it another way in which I'm bad as I am, and I'll be good when I get to that, and all that stuff we tend to layer on it.

So I really appreciate you bringing it up, because as the one holding this seat, I so much don't want to confuse people. And it's really hard. It's easy not to speak.

And then I see, as I saw at the Zen Center for thirty years, people suffer in the same patterns while their sitting is deepening. But because of the way the teachers were taught, you don't point those things out. You wait for them to be. And you see marriages struggling, and people with abuse difficulties, and alcohol difficulties, and all these things, and you go, oh my.

If you know something that you've seen with some reliability — not a hundred percent, but some really good reliability — that can ease suffering, try to encourage it. That's where I'm coming from.

And I really need all of these comments, because everything I say is wrong in some context. It's incomplete. Suzuki Roshi would say you can only talk about one side of the moon. If you're talking about the dark side, you can't talk about the light side. Talking about the light side, you can't talk about the dark.

So if we're working with this stuff, really, it all can lead to confusion. And yet these kinds of distinctions, and this kind of pointing out, for some people in the room right now, will make a difference in a life forever. Because something gets seen in a new way, and one knows how to work with it.

So. We do have lots. Thank you.

[Silence 2 minutes]

A trillium

[Participant 7:] Which is the mechanism that I bring the ground to — a mechanism that tangos, dances, is with the ground and the gravity, and the responsive integration. Being able to respond to something that is creating that opportunity to create a skill, to develop a skill, to move towards — which I love, what you said about lessening, looking for ways to lessen the suffering.

And then I am the machine, and perhaps the machine has some damage, and perhaps the machine isn't ready for that. So there's that line between humanness, for me, or the ground, and this very easy place that I can fly out into.

So when you say drop down, down, down, down, sometimes that's heaviness for me. But the inquiry for me is the mechanism that I want to continue to upgrade, in order to lessen the suffering. And my historical self is a paradoxical, happy-in-the-moment self. And to be aware of that — but I get the edge of confusion, and then I talk it, and then I just kind of go into this: huh, sit down, sit down and rest, like they used to. But so many times in practices, the physicalness is something I don't need.

Recently I did something with Rick Hanson, Buddha's Brain, who's really helping me to integrate. The mechanisms. The vehicles.

[Russell:] I didn't understand what you meant, that the brain isn't included, or something.

[Participant 7:] Well, it's a sense of an interesting, or a meaningless, metaphor. I remember when I was about six or seven, going into the woods with my grandmother. And she loved to take us into the woods to make these terrariums. Little did we know, we were making them out of highball glasses, which Grandfather couldn't drink from. She thought if she used the highball glasses, he wouldn't drink anymore.

We were filling them with goods, wonderful natural goods. And I'll never forget the moment when she labeled a trillium a trillium. It was very depressing. My world shut down. My space became narrow. It meant the mechanism. Somebody identified that as a thing instead of an experience.

And so there's this line for me. Make any sense? Where the brain — I've started to study the brain as this vehicle for motion, a kind of ethereal space between the fish and the water, and — wow, I'm getting confused. And the matter, with the fact that there —

[Russell:] Still not getting the essence of what you'd like me to hear. If you can make it shorter, if it's possible. If it's not, that's okay too. We can get to it another time.

[Participant 7:] Maybe what I'm saying is different portals of getting to some place. Maybe I'm going to sit with this for a while and come back to you.

[Russell:] Okay. That sounds good.

Perfect as you are

[Participant 8:] Just one more question. This morning you used some different words, and one of the terms is original nature. And then we also throw around the term true self, periodically.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 8:] And I get a little confused. And I know the author of the old Zen book that you've had us read.

[Russell:] Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind?

[Participant 8:] Yeah, Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind. There's a part in that that talks about striving not to strive. To say that you can never know the truth, so don't bother trying, right?

And so I get a little confused. If you're in your conditioned self, and you're trying to do this work to be more in touch with yourself, or your unconditioned, whatever — and there's that paradox. They're saying, well, you can't really do it, so don't bother.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 8:] It's a paradox.

[Russell:] Yeah. Yeah. Well, like I say, paradox is as close as we're going to get to it.

To use — his name was Shunryu Suzuki. I'll call him Suzuki Roshi sometimes. He was my first.

He loved to say: you're perfect as you are, and there's always room for improvement. Right?

And so I bring that because — I mean, Zen people get accused of being confusing and obtuse and all like this, but it's really trying to point toward this edge. That to strive to know yourself is — you'll strive in your conditioned ways.

That's what Feldenkrais meant when he would talk about, don't use willpower. But he wasn't saying don't do, and he wasn't even saying don't effort. But it's a different kind of effort. And we've got to keep pulling the rug out from the one who thinks they're going to do it. But at the same time, create conditions for — in some traditions it would be called grace — or create conditions for seeing.

And that's about as good as we can do.

I don't see anything else to do, though. Or anything else worth doing.

[Participant 8:] He also says, if you make one mistake after another. That was a different Zen teacher, also.

[Russell:] Yeah. Yeah, I like that too. One mistake after another. That's right. That's right.

And it's helpful — and this is where it gets, again, another layer of trickiness. How to have directionality that's not striving. So it's not just haphazard, one mistake after another. We can do that and live a chaotic life, right?

And then, everyone in this room is here, and giving up a lot to be here, because there's some sense of directionality, or an intuition, or a feeling of something unfolding in some direction, and maybe this could be helpful for that.

And I am wanting to offer practices that can help the mistakes lead in a helpful direction, we could say. That there's a way. And it doesn't mean we're in charge of it. But to say that we're not in charge of it, and that we can't control it, doesn't leave the conclusion, well, there's nothing to do about it.

No. There is directionality. There are ways of working that are reliable. Absolutely reliable.

And what I'm thrilled by, and humbled by, is that there's something a little bit unique in the combination of working with our bodily patterns and, we could say, unwinding the infrastructure of our historical self. Unwinding the infrastructure of our historical self, which is one of the functions of Feldenkrais movements. So we can actually feel ourselves differently in there, in some of those deep old places.

That there's something about combining that with then coming onto the cushion, and then being able to do some inquiry, some looking, but in a way that's a little bit different than just thinking about it. It's actually that holistic sense of listening with the whole body. That's something about how those work together.

I'm very moved by what I see happening with them. This is an experiment, right? It's only ten years old. This is occurring, and we've got some pretty good indicators, but we are in it right now.

[Participant 8:] Yeah, very, very much so. I really agree with you.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 8:] And there's been something that brought us here, too.

[Russell:] Yes. Yes. Each person's. For your whole life, right.

[Participant 8:] That's right.

[Russell:] Each history. And each of us bringing a different universe, really.

Okay, let's have one more, and then I've got a few more things I want to do this morning.

The edge of trust

[Participant 9:] Just — everything is sort of limited in my head right here. Which is, you said there were two things that supported — the gravitational, that the skeleton is here and supported, and there's gravity. And then the support that we have, which in my mind is turning into some kind of basic trust in life as it unfolds.

And that is what — it's not that I push back against that. It's like that's what I would like to have. And so when we talk about this unwinding of the historical self, I'm like, yes, yes, and then what?

So I guess what I'm saying is, I'm so grateful to be here, and so grateful for the work we did yesterday, because my tendency is to say, oh, we pulled back the curtain on that, that's done. But it's not done. And so then there's the steps, and what does that look like? And that's where the trust comes in. That's really an edge for me.

Intellectually I say I trust. I have those milliseconds when I know, but then that goes, and then I'm back in me, and the trust has gone. And wanting it back, and wanting it more trustworthy.

[Russell:] Right, right. Yes, yes, yes. Great. Yeah.

I suspect so.

Okay, now. I'm using those interchangeably. And again, let's not have some idea that that's bad stuff for some reason. We are each here to bring a different gift, and no one can bring the gift that you're bringing. And we want to help that gift come forward, in its most joyful way, its most loving way, its most connected way.

[Participant 9:] Yeah. Oh, yeah. Right, right. That is way beyond the conditioned mind.

[Russell:] And so I welcome your dialogue this morning. Thank you.

Okay, we're going to take a little pause. We're going to come back, and there's a practice I want to do before we do a movement lesson.

So we're going to do a practice that's going to occur with partners, and since we're an odd number, I will ask for a partner as well. And the practice will begin with me modeling the practice, so you have a kind of image of what it'll be like. It'll be different for you, but just to give you — it's easier than explaining it forever — and then you'll engage in the practice together.

Okay, so let's take maybe ten minutes and come back.

Thank you.