Movement lesson

Angela 2 — Week 1, Day 4, Session 7 — 46 minutes

Summary: Lying on the back, side-bending and pelvic turning soften the ribs so the chest can yield. Touch invites the rib cage to become a basket rather than a cage of self-protection, and the head spirals as the pelvis rolls. The same quality is sensed sitting and standing.

On the back

Come onto your back.

Sensing the support of the earth, a living relationship to this ground behind you.

Bend your right leg to standing.

Just connect to the movement we experimented with a little bit yesterday. Turning the pelvis to the left, keeping the knee vertical, sensing where you push through the foot, and the change of weight across the back of your pelvis.

Take your time, many times, to feel what you can through that movement, letting your attention move throughout yourself.

Varying the speed is a good idea, so sometimes really slow, sometimes a little faster. But always listening to the quality, and particularly noticing the change of weight in connection to the earth, how you roll across the earth, how you press into the earth.

That's good.

Lengthen your leg, and pause for a moment.

Turn your head a bit right, a bit left. Lightly.

A rib basket

And as you pause in the middle there, sensing the contact of the back of your torso with the ground — chest, and the movement of your chest as you breathe, the image you carry of your chest.

Just place your hands on your chest like we did yesterday. Letting your attention go through your hands to the cloth, to the skin, to the bones, to the life underneath your hands.

And as we were saying this morning, that picture, that our sense of our body is an original sense of self — sense of weight, the sense of contact, the sense of I'm here and not there.

Let your hands move to another place in your chest and feel, almost like you're inviting the cells through your hands and through your touch and through your presence. You know, I'm here. I'm alive here.

I think it's an unfortunate phrase that we have in English, a rib cage. In German, it's a rib basket. And I'd rather have a basket than a cage. So you have a choice. You can make up something else if you want. A basket feels right.

Interlace your hands under your head with your elbows out to the side.

From this position, sense the shape of your chest. Where you feel light, where you feel heavy, where you feel mobile. Where you feel it may be compressed or tight.

Getting some kind of image of your breastbone, and the ribs around the sides that connect to the vertebrae. Ribs around the other side that connect to the vertebrae.

So there's this surrounding, and yet there's a yielding. When the ribs get really hard, the lungs can't move so easily. It's one of the big problems for people, especially as they get older, but even younger people, when the ribs lose their pliability, the lungs can't push out easily, lightly, and it really limits our flow of oxygen.

Bending to the right

So we want to learn how to soften in the chest, and slowly slide your arms and your head as if they're one unit. Slide them to the right, and a little bit downward, as if the right elbow begins to arc a little bit downward, but gently and slowly. You're inviting a bending in the ribs on the right.

Go slow and smooth, a little slower, slower. So you can feel how the left side lengthens, how there are these ribs under the armpit that can find their length, and how the right side can fold, and there can be a kind of arcing of that elbow.

And keep inviting a softening in the chest.

Stay with your head down there to the right. Pause in some comfortable place, and take your left hand out, and reach over to your right ribs, near your armpit, up the side. Just let your left hand connect in sensation to the ribs, all the way from the lower ribs near your pelvis, the floating ribs, all the way up to the ribs under your armpit.

And as you touch, it's almost like you're inviting them — hello there, hello there, I'm with you. You can soften.

It's a little gentle touching, and sometimes you might even feel that the head will bend easily a bit more as those ribs soften. Maybe. You don't have to force that.

Just inviting those ribs with your touch.

And every once in a while, seeing, does the head slide just a bit easier.

That's it. Good.

Then come back to neutral, and lower your hands to your side, and just pause.

Notice how the two sides feel a little bit different, maybe.

And notice how the breathing moves through your right side and left side.

And when yawns or sighs come, really let them happen. Let your diaphragm move, let the ribs find their mobility.

The pelvis and the ribs

Place your hands under your head once again, and bend your right leg once again.

Slide your head a bit to the right and downward, sliding the arms and the head together. Stay there, a comfortable place.

Then slowly, with your head here, roll your pelvis to the left, and listen to how the movement travels up your spine.

What happens to your breastbone?

There may come a time where it feels like you can slide the head further down. You're not forcing, you're just seeing, does some territory open when the pelvis turns?

And then when you bring the pelvis back towards the floor, you don't assume that the head has to go back to where it was. You're checking. You don't want any strain, but you're gradually using the turning of the pelvis to open up the space in the ribs, in the chest.

It's a way of softening the attachments of the ribs and the vertebrae and the intercostal musculature between the ribs, and getting that mobility around your breastbone, which is so very important.

So much of our self-protectiveness is held through a rigidity in our chest. Our holding onto a certain image of self. Want to help soften that.

That's it. Good.

And you keep sliding the head, and if you can stay down further to the right, you stay there. Only if that's comfortable. You're not forcing. You're turning your pelvis.

That's it. Good.

Then you can slide back to neutral. Lengthen your arms and pause once again.

As you pause, you might just roll your head a bit and notice the quality of movement. Often this bending movement is wonderful for the rotation.

Just pause and enjoy resting here.

[Silence 33 seconds]

Spiraling

Bend your right leg, interlace your hands under your head, slide the head down to the right. Feel where it's comfortable to go to, see if that space is opening a bit, and then take your right hand out and lengthen that arm down your side towards your foot. Bring your left arm upward on the floor, so the left side is long, and on the right side the ribs are bent.

Gently begin to experiment with moving your head a bit more rightward, lengthening your right arm a bit more, letting your left arm shift over towards the right a little bit. So you're kind of almost like walking on your shoulders a little bit, bringing your hand closer to your foot.

The right side is folding and the left side is long. The left arm is up.

If you can get your hand near your foot, if you can touch the pant leg, if you can hold the ankle, do that. You can move the foot also, but don't strain to do it. Just get to where you can comfortably.

Again, the pant leg is good, or just being near the foot is good, but if you can hold it without strain around the ankle, do that.

The left arm is long upward. The head has slid over to the right. The nose is towards the ceiling.

Begin to roll your pelvis towards the left, turning, taking the right side of the pelvis away from the floor. And as you turn the pelvis, let the head turn to the left also, as if you wanted to see your left hand. You're not going to, but as if you would, and let the left arm lengthen a bit.

You can even let the back of the head slide a little on the floor so your nose begins to point a little bit upward towards that hand.

So the whole left side gets long, the right side is bending, and the head in this bent position begins to turn to look upward. It's as if your head is spiraling out of your pelvis.

And the nose begins going in the direction of the hand, if possible, so the back of the head kind of slides on the floor. The chin comes away from the chest a little bit, and the whole front of you begins to get longer.

That's gently lengthening.

And stay in. You're raising and lowering your pelvis.

When you lower the pelvis, let the head roll back towards neutral, with the nose towards the ceiling. As you turn the pelvis, let the head also turn a bit leftward, as if you wanted to see your left hand.

It's as if the head kind of spirals out of your pelvis.

Let the chin come away from the chest. That's part of that spiraling feeling, as if the back of the head goes towards the right shoulder a little bit.

That's good.

Then slowly, slowly unwind from that. Let go. Don't move abruptly, cause there are deep changes happening skeletally right now, combining these different directions of movement. So come back gently, bring your arms back to your side, and just get a sense of what's shifting in your skeleton, in your whole vertebral column, in your chest, feeling of your ribs.

Notice if your breathing is influenced at all. Shape of your torso is influenced at all.

Listen to the internal volume. Can you practice bringing your attention inside the ribs? Can you imagine like you're coming around the insides of the ribs? Imagining that volume on the inside of your torso as you sense the breath.

The other side

Bend your left leg to standing. Take a moment just to feel the foot clearly.

Roll your pelvis to the right. Feel that movement. Let that get really light. Take your time to feel the interconnections. How your chest moves.

Each moment, there's a change of connection to the earth.

Let the knee be vertical.

Begin to also sense the head going rightward as the pelvis goes right. Feel that go through you.

Keep your leg bent. Interlace your hands non-habitually. Move all the fingers over one digit, and put them under your head.

Actually, lengthen your left leg to start. Just begin with your left leg long. So both legs are long.

Let an image come of the shape of your chest, the width, the depth, the sense of the breath and how it moves.

Then slowly begin to slide your head and arms down to the left. Take your time to really allow some of what you don't sense immediately.

We all have certain places that are easy to sense, and we usually keep going to those places. And it's interesting to see, how can I feel what I can't feel? How can I sense what I don't know yet?

Well, use what you can sense. The hands are interlaced under the head, and use what you can sense to help clarify what's going on in those ribs on the left, what happens to the breastbone.

If you travel down, which ribs can you feel clearly? Where are the gaps?

Stay to your left and free your right hand to explore your left side, your ribs on your left side. Feel the texture. Notice, if you press a little bit, could they bend a little easily? Do they push back or do they yield?

What's the quality and texture of the ribs on the left side under your armpit?

So you stay to the left and your right hand is exploring the ribs. Your head is bent to the left, your right hand is exploring, all the way up to the ribs under the armpit.

Then interlace the hands once again, bend your left leg, and as you turn your pelvis to the right, notice if more territory opens in your chest that you can bend without strain, and maybe even stay in some of that new territory, if that's comfortable.

Without aggression, without force. The pelvis turns, and then you let the pelvis come back towards the floor, and you're seeing, can that bending still take place?

And then you do it again, and gradually you start feeling maybe more and more bending in the chest, even in the sternum, the breastbone.

When you turn your pelvis, really let the left side come away from the floor so that it's like your belly button begins to point rightward. And you feel that shift of weight over to the outside of the right side of your pelvis.

As you come back this time, gently return, unwind slowly, lengthen your legs, take your arms out, and let yourself have this.

Just slightly, maybe two times, roll your head left and right, and do it light enough that you can feel the quality.

Good. Interlace your hands non-habitually, bend your left leg, slide the arms and head leftward. Please take your left arm and lengthen it downward. Your right arm, lengthen it upward.

Slowly begin to explore how you could lengthen your left arm further down by walking a little bit on your shoulders, turning your head, letting your chest slide on the floor. Your left arm gradually gets near your foot. You can move your foot, and somehow you make contact, or nearly.

You don't strain, but you can touch or get hold of your pant leg or something.

And then from there, you turn your pelvis. Keep the knee vertical if you can. Turn your pelvis and begin to let the head both turn rightward and the back of the head slide. So the chin comes away from the chest, and you look towards that right hand.

It feels like a spiral coming out of your pelvis through the top of your head.

Then as you lower the pelvis, you let the head roll back with the nose towards the ceiling.

And then you roll the pelvis, the head turns and slides, and the chest lifts, and your whole vertebral column is supporting that movement.

Let the heel stay on the floor, so find a way for the foot to rest, and you can push through that whole foot, and feel what's happening to the shape of your whole chest.

Lengthening that right arm gently as you look towards it.

Great.

Then slowly, as you come back this time, unwind, come back to neutral.

[Silence 2 minutes]

Inside the chest

Your hands rest on your chest. Listen to the quality, extending attention through the cloth, through the skin, through the bones, into the interior.

Using sensation and imagination to move consciousness into the interior of your chest.

Sinking all the way back towards the front of the ribs that are resting on the floor. So all the way — the ribs that would be facing your hands, the front of the ribs that are around back.

Just let your attention drop through the depth of your torso, and then go to another place, and feel from the surface through.

Side to side

Interlace your hands non-habitually under your head.

Gently slide your head down to the right. Feel how that goes through you. Feel your shape, and then slowly go back to neutral and slide all the way down to your left.

Listen. Really take your time. We're inviting a kind of entering of this area that used to be a cage, and we're hoping it becomes something softer. And we want to know it, we want to enter it.

Good.

With your head back all the way to the right, bend your right leg, turn your pelvis leftward, slide a little further down if it's comfortable, lengthen your right leg, but stay there with your head.

Bend your left leg. Slide your head slowly to the left and downward, and at a certain moment it'll feel right to turn your pelvis also, and let your pelvis help the sliding.

Lengthen your left leg, and bend your right leg, and slowly slide your head all the way rightward through neutral to the right. If you let the pelvis turn, you'll feel that there's a space that opens in your chest. You want that connection.

Then lengthen your right leg, bend your left leg, slide the head back through neutral, all the way leftward, and listen for the moment that it's harmonious for the pelvis to be turning, to support the bending of the head.

You can even begin to let the head turn a bit to look at the upward elbow.

And then as you come back to the other side, look towards the upper elbow.

The head turns in harmony with the pelvis turning, like a spiral coming out of the pelvis.

That's it.

As you come back to neutral this time, just pause.

Bend both legs. Take your hands out from under your head.

Notice if you can touch your right ribs with your left hand. Reach over your chest, so the left hand comes kind of near your armpit, or where you can reach, maybe the middle. Then let the right hand come over and find — so it's not crossing under the other, it's crossing over, so that the arms are freer.

You might touch more of the shoulder, but you're listening for the ribs if you can. Trying to feel if you can get in contact with the ribs.

Just very lightly turn your chest a bit right and left in this position. Let your head turn.

That's good.

Let your arms come down.

Just one last time, let your head roll once or twice. Feel the quality.

And sense into the shape and quality of your chest.

Sitting and standing

Then roll to your side, and come on up to sitting.

Take a moment to sense your breathing. Sense your shape.

Your hands feel your chest. It's like you're saying hello to the life that's in here.

We so often have learned to kind of — that expression — steel ourselves against something. So often our chests have borne the brunt of that.

And just gently, with a little gentle weight, let the chest drop a little bit. Come up and drop a little bit.

You can also feel — I mean, all the movements of the chest are affected by this freedom of bending, but then also feel just the bending movement itself.

Feel the quality of yourself when your chest gets a little soft.

Can you just come to standing, please?

Just feel what happens when you're in standing after this kind of movement.

[Silence 49 seconds]

Move in whatever ways you like.

It's time for dinner.

And as you can probably sense, it's a whole different flavor comes when the chest is influenced these ways.

For those who are interested, I did bring my assistant teacher. He's over in the corner, hanging there. Sometimes I'll actually bring him out to demonstrate things, but if you're at all interested in the shape of your ribs and stuff, it can help.

Have a good dinner. He looks like he needs dinner.