Discussion

Angela 2 — Week 1, Day 6, Session 2 — 73 minutes

Summary: News that two cars were vandalized opens a group inquiry into worry, care, and the wish to help. Hearing needs lead into host and guest, and into serving the life of an interaction. A guided session meets strength beside vulnerability, and the talk rests in holding roles lightly inside a welcoming spaciousness.

The worried place

[Russell:] Once again.

So I just heard that two cars were vandalized last night.

Peter's.

So I've alerted the office, and they're contacting police.

What I — there's nothing for us to do about it right now.

I notice — well, actually, let's pause. So you all notice what comes for you.

What I notice is a kind of tightening here, and concern. The biggest concern — it's a little too fast. Let me go a little slower.

I know the concern I have up here. Yeah, it's here.

The sense of safety. Sense of safety — so very important to me that we feel our space is safe.

Just saying hello to the place that's worried about that.

It's actually not that I feel unsafe. It's worry. That's good. That's an important distinction.

At first it came across as not safe, but I don't feel unsafe. It's a worried place.

And that feels good, to just get that right.

I need just a little bit to be with, here, kind of.

What can I do? What can I guess? So something wants to take action, take care of people.

I notice that voice comes up that's not in the worried place, that's running all around in you.

It likes that.

And so I'm just sensing it. As I'm with this place, it kind of shifts. It tightens and releases, tightens and relieves. It's not a solid thing.

Still wants the hand there.

Taking in the breath again feels nourishing for this place.

It's opening. It's opening now. It's living as more.

It's a lighter kind of concern. So, worried. It's got a lighter feeling.

And there's a real wanting to see what's needed, what's needed here.

So I feel the energy of that — what's needed, what can help. So I notice that, and that feels good. That feels like that's actually where I want to be right now, is check in with people.

Where are you hearing that a couple of cars got broken into?

What is needed here for us to be able to feel whole and complete and full? So that's what I'm working.

So I need to know how you are.

So feel into yourselves, what comes, and see if anything needs attention right now.

Yeah. Yeah, so.

Thank you for doing that. Yeah.

What I experience is, I've had a story about a place that's changed.

With it hot off the press, I will take care of what I leave in my vehicle.

I don't think it was the coyotes that we heard. At first I said, well, maybe the coyotes got really smart and figured out, you know, somebody left food in the car, right?

Coming from New York, it's like, it's not so different here.

[Participant:] Like, you were talking about a real desire to want to help Bob and Wendy and Peter, and just feeling like, you know, where are they right now? And how can we — if at all any of us have gotten this way — how can we bring, you know —

[Participant:] It's only sadness, really. And that people are so desperate, and people maybe strung out on drugs. Interesting thing, what's been solved for those people.

And I don't know, I guess this could be considered arrogant. I feel arrogant because — just us getting arrested — that. I mean, Thailand, there's a horrible violation, of bombs, when walking through stations. We gave them all this stuff. Had not great reactions, and maybe have compassion for those who've had such little compassion for themselves as to harm others.

So look at us, with our tools, capacities, training, growing our resources, speaking that we don't need. Well, compassion I seem to want to give to them first. Then to us, and let them make us feel a little bit of maybe what you were saying yesterday, Andy, about going out and not remembering this.

[Russell:] Right, right, right. Yeah.

One body

[Russell:] I want to bring forth a picture that this is all one body, and all that's being voiced is living in this body.

And maybe even living in each of our bodies in different degrees. Some of us get more the anger place, some more the hurt place. But at least we — certainly in the body of us — there's room for all of this. For taking care of others, for taking care of self, for having these other feelings. These angry, hurt, safe, unsafe. Different story emerging. Actions to be done again.

What I want to suggest and invite is a sense that there's space for all of it.

We don't have to pick what looks like the good stuff. Leave out the stuff that we think is less worthy or something. There's room for all of it.

It's part of our basic work here, is to find out just how spacious we are.

Host and guest

[Participant:] Please. I want to — I have a request. That when people share, I so much want to hear what you say, and I am hard of hearing, and my hearing aids are not working as well as I would like, and when you share, I don't always hear you. So if you just — it feels a little weird to be asking that.

[Russell:] Oh, it's a gift. It's a gift.

[Participant:] If you notice me standing for long, it's not like a disco look.

[Russell:] So, it's a good look. It's a good look.

[Participant:] Really, thank you.

[Russell:] And please remind us. There are a few people who are dealing with hearing issues, and it's really, really important.

And what I want to say to everybody — and because I know you a little better, I want to say to you as well as to everybody — it's not a burden in any way to ask for what you're really needing, especially something that is a connector.

So when we are in our partnerships, our focusing, when we get into that and are listening to each other — even if your role is just listening, not saying something — if you're not hearing, you don't just go as if you're hearing. That makes a difference.

It's too subtle for a lot of us to understand how that communicates body to body, but body to body it communicates.

So when you're not hearing, it influences the receiving of what's being said, and the receiving is part of the completion of the transmission for the speaker.

In Zen, they call this host and guest, and they complete each other. And it's not that one is the better and one is the worse, or one is even the giver and the receiver. It's that it's a complete action, that the one can't complete itself without the participation of the other.

And I want you to get that. It's not like theoretical, or nice, or poetic. That's actually a bodily experience of completion.

You know the sense of giving somebody something, and it's not received. You know that incomplete moment.

And so often, many of us who are the caregivers are so unskilled at receiving the care, asking for what's needed, and we think in some unconscious way that we're actually being generous by not putting our burdens on them.

But actually, a whole interaction is being incomplete. A whole movement in the life force is being left unfinished.

So please, please, please. Yes.

And there are delicate moments like this. We have to listen, of course, for the right — you know, sometimes somebody's so — well, I'm really — could you speak Latin? You might have to wait. You know, of course we're going to be sensitive. But we will include it as not just my desire, but actually something that completes the interaction.

Do you get the different perspective? That's what we're talking about. So in terms of taking care of the interaction, it's a beautiful way of thinking of our situations.

See, we divide most of our situations into taking care of myself or taking care of the other. Do I take care of myself? Do I take care of them? That's old news.

We need a whole different kind of being in situations that neither excludes the one here nor the ones there, but is looking at how life is served in this situation.

So sometimes it means not asking the person to speak louder for a little bit of time, because life is being served, because it's a delicate moment, and that would be too abrupt. And then there's a gap, and then it's saying, if it's okay to speak a little louder, I'd love to hear you more clearly. And then that adds a kind of life-giving force to the interaction.

But this — do you hear what I'm saying? — is actually an invitation for a way of looking at our interactions in our life, in general. Looking at our interaction.

It gets beyond, am I selfish or too giving? It's looking at situations, and how can I get some sense of, we could say, the needs of this situation.

Moving closer

[Participant:] I have another piece. Embodied hearing. One is — from the dance world I come from, improvisation.

We make a lot of choices based on perception and what we need, and so it's so not in our normal culture to actually think of so much of moving your body in a way that's good for you, towards the thing you need. Like if I can't see something, I'll sit back and not see it, you know, rather than get closer and look. There's a real sedentary quality, I think, in our cultural habit that might prevent us from somehow just moving closer to hear or to see. Making choices that are embodied and personal that way, that can be challenging at times, because it thinks it might be a little bit crossing over a boundary that way too.

So I just wanted to empower anyone who needs to hear it from closer. If I'm speaking too softly — I mean, it's fine to ask me also — but I think it's interesting to play with the movement of the body that way also.

Thank you.

[Russell:] Okay, so I would like — well, Christine.

[Participant:] This subject really touches my heart deeply, because I can't hear that well. And so it brings up a lot of emotion for me, and so I'm just deeply appreciating this conversation, and being open, because I played with it a lot.

I've been on the other end of not saying anything, and then being incomplete is the big thing that I have felt a lot. And I'm just learning now to just actually step forward, and move my body more, and leaning in more, and taking care of myself, where before I thought I was. And I actually really wasn't, but I thought I was getting it, but I was getting it in incomplete bits and pieces. So it brought me to a place of feeling isolated, which I thought that I was still fine.

So I don't know. This is big, that we can chat about it, and that I can have a voice about it too, even though it's crackling, and I'm a little bit teary about it. So I just want to say thanks.

[Russell:] Yeah. And I want to say something to you. I'm so grateful that you took the courage to sit here. I know it was — I've known you for a while now, and that's a big move.

[Participant:] Thanks. 'Cause I was at a workshop where I tried to give that up, and I sat way on the other end, and I wasn't hearing anything, and I was like, oh jeez, I deserve to be up there, because this is so important, this work. So thank you for opening and listening.

And I just want to say I'm so grateful, to be honest, you know, because it makes me more attentive and insightful. And the other thing is that if it's of any value to you, and you can find your own way — in retreats, workshops, where we've had this experience of people not being able to hear — is that rather than having to speak, about, if you please, repeat it, sometimes it's just a simple hand signal, and everyone then knows, good, I need to speak louder. So it's quite subtle, and the flow is really interrupted.

I don't want to be defined as Christine who can't hear.

[Russell:] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[Participant:] Two weeks ago I was here, and I was struggling with that spot, and all of you, and embracing all of you, and embracing myself. And I closed my eyes, and I was just totally teared up, because I don't want to be defined by my hearing.

I wish Peter were here for part of this conversation.

[Russell:] Yeah, yeah.

[Participant:] And anyway, I had a one-on-one with Peter, and he basically said, I'll need to move forward. So how is that for you? Am I in your space?

It was the first time I've ever really had a conversation right up front, and I said to him, you are, but I'm going to have my eyes closed, so it's fine.

It gave me a sense of, oh, somebody will probably be closer to me than I'm comfortable, but I think within how we're doing this, this will work. And that sense of naming what is needed was very helpful to me as a receiver.

I just got to experience — both of us had needs. He needed to be closer, and I needed to know that my space would be a little bit different.

So anyway, I'm hoping that he — and he may have other helpful ways — and then he said, I'm a big person, so if I move in closer, that might not be comfortable. So he was aware of a whole sense of body, dimensions. Anyway.

Strength and vulnerability

[Participant:] Somebody asked about how I was doing. Part of me is wondering if I should be with my husband. We've been dealing with another life issue, and I'm like, I don't need another life issue. I need to be here in the group. So I made that choice, but as the time is getting longer, and they're not coming back, part of me is wondering how much damage is done.

And it was interesting. I was thinking, how we experience something that's happening right in the moment is a lot more confusing than how it will be tomorrow, when there's some space. And so I don't know how to read my body as well. It's kind of going in and out of a little bit of fear, like, how much — how expensive this is gonna be, and can we get home. And then I'm kind of smiling to myself. When we travel without a car, we travel light, and we traveled a little heavy this time. I'm like, oh, if we have to sort of not have our car, it's gonna be a little bit harder.

Anyway, a lot of it is confusing. I have a hard time knowing what my inner self — where it's grounded, or where it's settled. Feels very all over the place.

[Russell:] Would you like a little guidance, or is that okay?

So, first, I'd invite Wendy. Drop into your bottom. Let's leave, if possible, leave the belly and all in the background. Really feel your physical body sitting here.

The sensations of weight, pressure. Sense of your right foot, just how your right foot is shaped right now. Pressure on the right knee.

Dropping into your left foot, noticing if there are any temperature sensations there. Its shape, its contact. Pressure on the left knee, where you can feel the contact with the ground.

And noticing your hands, how they're touching your legs and touching each other. You can feel those contact points.

Now, as you're settling into your body, also include the sounds in the space around you. You're in a space larger than your physical body. Letting those sounds fill out the space around you.

As you sense the space of the room and those sounds, also the ground underneath.

Just gently bring attention into your body, into your chest and belly. Just say hello to what's in there. Whatever it is.

If it feels right, you can describe some of what you sense in there.

[Participant:] Oh, it just feels like a kind of a brick. Heavy block.

[Russell:] Yeah, yeah. So you're noticing a heavy block, like a brick in your belly.

And some time right there, just letting that brick-like place know you're with it.

[Participant:] Also is strong.

[Russell:] Also strong. Solid, brick-like, and strong.

[Participant:] Strong feeling. But maybe not strong enough.

[Russell:] Then a concern comes, something like, maybe not strong enough.

So. Just notice that here in the belly, there's something that feels very strong, solid, and then there's also a feeling someplace in you that says, maybe not strong enough. And there's room for that too.

Notice where or how that might be alive, the maybe not strong enough.

[Participant:] Maybe up here.

[Russell:] So check in there. See if you go into your chest, is that concern about being strong enough somehow living in a way you can feel it.

Again, just let it know you're with it.

And so you're with this place — I'm concerned — and this solid place.

[Participant:] Well, I don't think my not-being-strong-enough place — I don't think I have, in times of — I think I take refuge in action instead of listening. So I'm not used to knowing how to be vulnerable and strong.

[Russell:] Yeah, yeah. It's really letting you sense right now, something's unusual. This is not familiar.

Yeah, really let your body know that you know that this is an unusual way to be right now, with this strength, and the usual kind of taking of action, and this uncertainty, this other place. And you're just learning right now to be with all of this.

Let it be there. That's the feeling.

[Participant:] I'm laughing, 'cause that's the second lesson.

[Russell:] That's right. It's a continuation from our work yesterday, on a completely different subject, but your body is teaching you the same thing.

[Participant:] Right.

[Russell:] This is what's here. It's how to be vulnerable and connected to your state.

Be with them as it's alive in your body.

[Participant:] Well, my breathing is okay. Whether it is a place of vulnerability — but, 'cause they're both there, the breathing is freer.

[Russell:] With both of them there, the breathing gets freer. Yeah.

Yeah, I sense that a little bit, that both of these places here with the breathing.

[Participant:] It connects, actually.

[Russell:] Yeah, the breath connects these places.

Yeah. Let's stay here just another minute, to really get the body feeling of the connection brought to you through breath. This, the way it feels, that I'm connected this moment to my vulnerability and my strength.

Give another instance of letting your body connect to that. Recognizing that it's a learning that's in process.

[Silence 31 seconds]

Maybe if it feels right, just thank your body that it has all this living, and it's coming forward so directly, respectfully, for your learning.

[Participant:] I didn't know you'd be back to really listen more. It's wisdom.

[Russell:] Really take your time to bring attention back to feeling the ground, hearing the sounds around you, so it's not an abrupt movement out.

You feel ready, but your eyes just begin to take in light, color, shape.

[Participant:] Thank you.

[Russell:] Can I make a comment? Even as I've seen it, oh, thousands of times, always so touched by the inner intelligence. How yesterday's depth of learning, and how that's living in your body in a completely different situation, is ripening with this new situation.

And, you know, who could make up stuff like that?

How the light gets in

[Participant:] I had the image of — I was listening to — it's like, excuse me, I'll try to speak up.

This life delivers shocks that break us open if we are, you know, fortunate enough to receive. And it's that image of, we've had two car accidents, you know, of breaking something. And that it's brought this opportunity, and so many moments in life. It's like we resist the shock, and we fight to maintain our stance. I think this work is about doing something differently.

[Russell:] Yeah. Do you know that line from Leonard Cohen? You got that? What are you just thinking?

[Participant:] Yeah. A cultural milestone or something.

[Russell:] Who wants to give the line? So give the line. Who wants to give it? Go ahead.

[Participant:] There's a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in.

[Russell:] That's how the light gets in.

Bob.

[Participant:] Hi.

[Participant:] I'm wanting — I think I was speaking for the group, but I'll speak for myself — wanting to know how you are, how it is, and an update.

[Participant:] Sure. Basically, it was fear in my car, a car in the tools, a car in the lodge. My guess is they didn't think they were alarmed. This one was not. Mine was.

Unfortunately, I heard an alarm in the middle of the night, just didn't respond. Probably kids. The police will come up and do a report. Fear may have to come get me.

And then — basically, they've broken windows on both cars. And my car, there's nothing that I remember, except we turn off the radio. I wish I could remember. Thomas and Peter's car had hidden his walk. So he's in the process.

Yeah. And it's hard to laugh. Okay, I'm sorry. It's like the craziness, and I've been here. You know, like layers of events. Sorry about this.

Yeah, that's what's there right now. It's just kind of that. It's crazy. At least for now.

All they actually took was the radio.

[Russell:] Okay. Next step. This is actually perfect.

Before the stories

[Russell:] So I brought an image in the meditation this morning about this spaciousness. Called it a blue sky, was the image.

I also had in the image the sense that there was light permeating them. Light is a — its function is noticing. It sees what's there. It allows what's there to be seen. It's not a dark space. It's got, we could say, capacity for noticing.

And then the image is, whatever appears in a moment — whether it's this feeling in the belly, or a thought of concern, or the thought, I got to remember to go to the post office — anything that appears is a movement through the vastness of your being.

Giving an image. Talking about something that has no qualities is both dangerous and breaks down eventually, but it's also helpful to have a picture. We hold it lightly, that there's in our beingness, in our experiencing, fundamentally — if we get down to, well, what is there before I'm a man, originally from New York, and born at this time, and living here. Before all my stories. Before I'm a teacher, or a husband, or a student, or a person this high or this weight, or has these sensations, or these — before any, before my memories, before any defining quality. What's here?

And what I suggest, and for your investigation, is, well, for living to know living, for life to be conscious of itself, there needs to be a space for something to appear in.

If we didn't have a space, we couldn't meet here. There's a space for something to appear. And there would need to be some capacity for noticing that something was appearing.

And I could say, in this vastness of space, there comes this capacity for noticing, and then there's the infinite potential for what's going to appear, because everything that appears in that moment never appeared just like that before.

So we are that. We are this space, this light, and this infinite potential for the arising of the next.

But as soon as we — I'll use a strong word that will have meaning to some — glom onto a particularity within that spaciousness, and I call that I am a teacher. Well, then all of a sudden I have to have students. Then all of a sudden I have certain kinds of — if I have a strict definition of what that means, then I have to turn other people into certain things.

Just like, if I'm a healer, I've got to have sick people. Then I create a world full of sick people, so I can be a healer.

Now, it's fine if I can hold it lightly and say, okay, I'm going to temporarily make believe I'm a healer. Just like — and I take this very deeply, as I love being a father. I love being a father. And I know that I'm not basically a father, fundamentally. My daughter is not my daughter, and she is me. And I need both of those.

I need both of those intimately, deeply, just like I need the two senses of time I was talking about this morning. I need them intimately, deeply, in my experience. That if I start thinking I really am a father, my voice changes. I start falling into certain things about fathering that don't end up being beneficial.

If I'm holding it lightly, then I can have some very father-like interactions that are very life-giving.

Do you get what I'm doing? I'm not throwing away father-likeness, right? What I'm calling into question is the identity of father.

And what I'm calling forth is, any place I identify this vast, infinite being — any place I identify them as an enlightened being, as a this, as a bad person, as a smart person, as a husband, as a man, as a — any place I collapse my identity and say, that's who I am — is a narrowing.

First of all, it's false, but it's a narrowing. And it's like putting oneself into a very tight, tight, tight, tight binding. Even the good ones.

And they're tricky, because when they start kind of feeling a little bit good. But I'll be the person who's very, very capable, and good at doing things. Yeah. And people can rely — I'm going to be a very reliable, capable person. That's me.

And those are really tricky ones, because they get some endorphins going, right?

The ones that are the — you know, most of us vacillate between our negative judgments, which become what we could call our depressors. Our negative judgments that, oh yeah. You know, I'll never be, what, fill in the blank — smart enough, thin enough, no one's gonna wanna love me, and that, you know, whatever it is.

And then we go — then that often gets met, and this is considered healthy, by the fixer. And the internal fixer arrives and says, okay, I'm putting you on a diet, and we're gonna go running, and we're gonna — and all of a sudden. But this is very seductive, because this one releases a bunch of endorphins, and a little bit of adrenaline, and some good feeling, like I'm really taking charge of my life.

This is a very tricky one. 'Cause we'd like to identify — we'd like to call that I. We'd like to call that I.

[Participant:] About collapsing?

[Russell:] Yeah, collapsing into any identity. Any identity, positive, negative, right?

And we're saying, these temporary roles — I'll get there in a sec — these temporary roles can be life-giving, right? If we hold them lightly, we can wear them like clothing. It's good to have different kinds of clothing for different kinds of weather, and you can be in different situations in more healthy ways. And for most of us, in most of our situations, we need some kind of clothing to put on for that situation.

But as soon as we start going like — looking good.

It's gonna kick you in the butt. It's going to, I promise. As much as I promise that we are, you know, we're going to end up dead, you know? I mean, it's true. I mean, let's not deny it, right? That's the direction of this physical form.

So, do you get what I mean? It's relentless. Undeniable.

Yes, Robert.

[Participant:] Oh, I'm sorry.

[Russell:] You don't get which?

[Participant:] I get what you're saying. Actually, I was tracking what you're saying quite comfortably, and identifying with a lot. Realizing that in any given situation, I wear different hats.

[Russell:] Right.

[Participant:] Sometimes I'm going to be quiet, attentive, and potentially vulnerable. You know, the situations, circumstances, are going to call for me to, let's say, take charge. Where does your direction lead in those circumstances?

[Russell:] You're neither of those. You can call yourself all of them.

But go slow. Go slow, and feel into the difference between you taking your inner situation that needs some caring for — and you have some abilities to care for, and you know how to do that — you also know, Peter, how to identify yourself as the fixer, and sometimes hide in the fixer place, and deal with people in a different way than when you are lightly holding yourself as the fixer in that moment.

You know, right? Can you feel? I know you well enough to know that you have a sense of the difference between, and that's the edge we're talking.

[Participant:] So, play the role, but don't take it too seriously?

[Russell:] That fits, except we need — I need a little bit more, which is a way of connecting to the ground of being before the role is assumed, and while the role is being assumed, and after the role has been assumed.

And when I lose that, to have the means to get back to it, even when I'm in the course of the action.

So when I'm getting hijacked by the father being in me — hijacked by that role — and I start hearing it in my voice, and I start noticing that I'm speaking in ways that are getting a reaction that is not so helpful, do I have the capacity to come back to the zero point, and eventually do that instantly, and find the pause in the moment, and kind of reset in a certain way, and continue engaging in the role, but now it's gotten saturated with some fresh air.

You with me?

[Participant:] I think so, too. Thank you.

The need underneath

[Participant:] My question's going to come around to — isn't there a role for a certain sense of authenticity of myself?

And I'll begin by saying that the role of the father, the role of the teacher, are there. And then there's another, much more pervasive role, which is more like my need to be seen, my need to be loved. And that can, when not activated, which is much of the time — I'm really outside myself. I'm driven in a way that's very uncomfortable.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant:] Unhelpful.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant:] And when I can notice that, I've only these days been able to welcome it and talk to it.

[Russell:] Oh, beautiful. Go slow here. We all need this. This is very important. That pervasive kind of inner need that moves through the different roles, to be able to sense that and talk to that.

[Participant:] Yes. And then, when I can relax that need to be seen, and have a feeling of relaxing my being, then everything changes. My eyes change. What I express to others changes. Certainly how I'm seen changes.

[Russell:] Yes. Yeah. How I'm seen changes. Yeah, yeah. But not for that reason.

[Participant:] Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. So there's a feeling of self that I hold on to. This. That make sense?

[Russell:] Oh, I'm right with you. All I'm wondering about is that self.

Okay, so let's make a distinction here. So, as we go back from the roles to that need that's permeating those different places, we're getting closer to the stem cells of the conditioned self.

It's still conditioned self, but it's closer to its source.

[Participant:] No, no. This is just before that.

[Russell:] When you're in touch with the place that has the need to be seen — that which pervades those different roles, the need to be loved or respected, or however it comes for us — those very authentic-sounding needs, which we're not judging them, please. We're not judging them. We're not saying they're bad and inauthentic.

Really, it's very important that that doesn't become the — it needs, just like you're saying, yes, to be open to, to find our unconditional welcoming, so that we can be with these very primary conditioned ways of organizing our life, or trying to be with others, and everything.

And the moment that we — my experience is, when I can be with that, the way you're describing, and really feel that relaxing, it's like there's an opening of space. Something that felt tightened releases. It never goes from release to more tight. It's very consistent.

It is often a breath. And there's this sense of — I want to say, true authenticity. I want to double it. Right?

Because for a long time — so I'm speaking to a lot of people in the room — for a long time, it will feel like when you drop down from the role to the need that's permeating, that will feel like the authentic self. Because you'll say, oh, I'm really in touch with this place that's always been here. Okay?

So there is something authentic about it. We don't want to judge that, but this is the true authentic that we're tracking toward. Okay? But we need to go through that.

So it is — it's been our friend, in a certain way, of keeping us alive in situations that have been challenging, et cetera. Taught us how to smile when we didn't really feel it, but it got us through that situation, and when we didn't have other ways. And so we want to bow to those ancient strategies, and not try to just push them away, but let them rest.

[Participant:] It seems to me also that a lot of self-talk comes out of that layer.

[Russell:] Yes. Good, good. Yeah.

[Participant:] The censoring of internal talk.

[Russell:] Yep, yep, yep, yep. A lot of the self-talk comes out of that layer.

[Participant:] Well, and — the layer of the role?

[Russell:] The inner, yeah. And then it comes up through the role, perks up through that.

[Participant:] Once you've identified that self — isn't under that self, that role, another, like an infinite?

[Russell:] Well, it's not an infinite regression, in the sense that you begin to get comfortable in the formless.

[Participant:] Can that be identified?

[Russell:] The form — well, we get very tricky when we bring any language into this now, so it's really fingers pointing to the moon. Because we can't solidify it.

We can speak of, yes, in the sense that formlessness always returns to form and melts away from form. And that it's not a thing. It's in motion, and it's living. But as we — this is why our sitting is so key — as we get more moments where we sense the background of a thought, and the space within it and around it, and we see everything is made of space, and we know that deeply, and then you see thought structures dissolving, like snowflakes falling into a lake, just — and they return to their original place, and they were nothing. They were empty. They appeared to have fullness, but they returned to their — and then you start being able to see within its form that it's already empty, and so you don't have to take it so seriously.

But yet it has — it gives you direction, and it's helpful temporarily. And so we learn how to navigate with its temporary form, but we don't get seduced by calling it something solid, or something forever, or something. So.

[Participant:] You said, stem cells of a conditioned self. Would that be like the original need of an infant to be seen, to be mirrored, to the formation of an ego?

[Russell:] Yeah. Nice, nice, nice.

So there's a subtle — let's say, that forming of a self, an infant, is an essential and healthy function.

What, when that self begins to experience unworkable situations, it begins to form patterns for getting its needs met.

If we drop back through the layer of patterns, we can come. But it's not just melting into the ocean. There is what we could think of as an authentic self that is differentiated from the cosmic being. So that we each have different ways of living when we are in connection. We each have different expressions when in connection.

Yeah, so it's not the old story of just melting into this pot of nirvana or something. That's an old story. This — we need autonomous individuals coming to their self-expression in connection with this.

So it feels very permeable to source, we could say, or permeable to — absolutely at home in this universe. Absolutely at home, and finding a way to navigate.

It's what — I'll get there in one sec. It's what I said to somebody here. One of the things missing from, oh, psychological or philosophical conversations for me, as I've been navigating this territory and trying to find ways to speak about it, is — in the East, and adopted since in the West — is talking about, oh, that's just your ego.

But we need to have the picture of a higher ego and a lower ego. And a higher ego is this autonomous being that's in connection to its talents, and source of life, and capacities, so it can give its gift. And not just be like everybody else. We want that.

That's the gift of the Western world, is to come out of that image of all melting into this pot, and honoring the individual. But we tend to go so far into that, that we lose the sense of that interconnectedness, that connectedness to something bigger than myself, so we fall into all that narcissistic stuff.

We want both of those.

[Participant:] Just what came to me when I heard that lovely metaphor is that the stem cells — stem cells can become anything. So it's inevitable that the conditioned self will arise, but the stem cells suggest the infinite possibilities.

[Russell:] Beautiful. Yes. Yes, yes. Very, very nice. Yes.

You are spaciousness

[Russell:] So let's pause for a moment. Close your eyes.

And invite your body. Invite your body to live into a sense of this vast blue sky, a spaciousness. If you don't like blue sky, just spaciousness is good.

A sense — we're trying on this image. If it doesn't work, that's okay. The image of, you are spaciousness. You are the capacity for noticing anything that occurs in this spaciousness.

And the atmosphere is one of welcoming any of the arising, including reactions to the arising.

So a cloud might come that's in the form of a voice, or a car engine. A thought might come of, oh, I wish that car wasn't here, or oh, I wonder if my car is all right. All of those are clouds, or

birds flying through the spaciousness of being, and you can rest here, noticing the comings, the goings, the reactions, and acknowledging what comes, and allowing it to move on. Or that image of a snowflake melting. The light that it's met with allows it to dissolve into space.

And if it keeps coming back, it's no problem. Nothing fights anything here.

[Silence 31 seconds]

And notice if you can have your eyes open and still have a sense of, I am space, I am the light, the noticing, welcoming, acknowledging the coming and going, and any reactions to the comings and goings. Those are all comings and goings.

Resting in the spaciousness of being.

Of course, sounds come, thoughts arise, feelings arise. That's all welcome and noticed.

We notice if something grabs the organism. Soon as we can, we welcome, acknowledge, rest in the spaciousness of being.

Doesn't feel spacious, we can rest in what's there.

It's helpful to include the space around your body, so you're not locked into a body.

Extend your attention to include the walls and the ceiling. Sounds.

If you find you get spacey, or just lost in thought, then use your bodily sense to help ground you.

You can even find the spaciousness right there in your bottom on the cushion. That weight falls into a sense of space.

One last thing. A little bit of a surprise, maybe, but this light-filled spaciousness goes by another name, and that's called love.

It's from different traditions, but it's the same quality. Spacious, warm. Welcoming the essence of our being.

[Silence 39 seconds]

And let's have a little pause.