Practice

Angela 2 — Week 1, Day 6, Session 3 — 51 minutes

Summary: Standing, the group senses weight through the feet and the play of earth and sky, then differentiates turning in the head, eyes, and shoulders. After a brief return inside, they recall a moment of presence and explore deep listening — how it feels to be received, and what it would be like to offer that same welcome inwardly.

Sensing the ground

[Russell:] Just as you're standing here, begin by sensing this support underneath you. Separate your feet a little bit, and have a feeling that you can actually sense through your feet.

If you're not sensing through your feet, bring more attention to the actual sensations of your feet. And you can let your knees soften.

Welcome, Peter. We're all with you. Come on. Would you like to come closer for the sound?

[Participant:] What?

[Russell:] Okay. So I'll speak up. Just lift your hand if I'm not speaking loudly enough. Anybody can do that.

Shift your weight. Have your feet apart, shift your weight, and we're going to first emphasize the connection to the earth. That's, most of the time, the most helpful beginning to our embodiment, to our presencing of a moment — to locate yourself through this gravitational contact, the sense of weight.

And that picture that Moshe got through Paul Schilder, of our proprioception, our sense of weightedness, being our original sense of a self — before words, before anything. That there is the forming of, I'm a here, not there. There's a location. There's an address. There's an address that you'll be using later to find yourself.

But this gives you, right now, this is the address you put into the — what do they call it again? The GPS. Yeah.

Okay, and give a little bounce as you shift. A little bounce. Shift your weight still.

[Participant:] Weight point?

[Russell:] Huh?

[Participant:] Weight point.

[Russell:] Weight point. That.

And now — it's helpful to know that even when you're in a busy store, the ground is still there, most of the time. Even in the middle of shopping, the ground is there. And even when you're flying in a plane, there's weight in your body, on your seat.

[Participant:] Yes, I've been there. Many times.

[Russell:] I can put you in a plane where you don't have any weight.

[Participant:] I'm sure you could.

[Russell:] And it can be taken at any moment.

Earth and sky

[Russell:] Okay, now, standing. Begin to connect. Let your feet be a little wider than your pelvis, and begin to connect as you shift weight. And the foot you're coming off of, let the heel lift. And as you come onto the one foot, keep the toes of the other foot down. Feel your upwardness.

So you're not trying to stretch. You're allowing the pressure receptors in your joints to have this responsiveness to weight, and just the thought of the up. Just the thought of up, and letting the celestial gravity act in concert with the earthly gravity. And you have this down and up force.

Come to your other foot. Let's go slowly from side to side a bit. Like speed skaters do. Yeah, they do.

If we have only the earth, we tend to get heavy. If we have only the up, we tend to get flighty. And we want the sense of grounded joy, or grounded uplift, grounded possibility. And that's an embodied state the body can be.

Now, as you come onto one foot, lift the same arm — the same sided arm of the side you're going toward. And so there's a sense that you can sense through your foot and look beyond your fingers, up towards the sky.

And notice that when you're letting your gaze go upward, you can also sense through the foot that you have most of your weight on. So that whole vertical domain, from way above you to below you. Come back. Lower your arm.

And the same side — come to the same side, up. Lifting the arm. Looking beyond your fingers, feeling the lengthening upward, and the groundedness into the earth. And then come back. Just feel the influence on your body, on yourself.

As the consciousness grows, and as awareness begins to form more regularly, it takes surprisingly little to recover your zero point, or your neutrality, or your presence, for your situations. That is a great gift, because we can't, in the course of our everyday life, take an hour much of the time. But if we can learn to have — maybe at first in two minutes, and then maybe in thirty seconds — ways of really neutralizing the organism, so we are then fresh for the new interaction.

Let's come to the other side, letting the arm lift way up beyond the fingers, up towards the sky, and into the earth. Your eyes soften. Bask. Joy — that open space, and the downwardness. Then come back to your trunk. And feel what begins to form in your standing.

What do you notice that has your interest?

[Participant:] What?

[Participant:] More solid.

[Participant:] More something here, something in the middle.

[Russell:] More solid, yeah.

[Participant:] Free pelvis, yeah.

[Participant:] My brain is also in my feet.

[Russell:] Brain also in the feet. Pelvis, both sides, the weight, free pelvis. Yeah.

[Participant:] Eyes to the horizon.

[Russell:] I wonder, does anybody feel that uplift and downlift at the same time?

[Participant:] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[Russell:] Let's go to the side you were just going to, the second side. Mostly it's been the left side. Looking way up. Letting consciousness pervade that whole side, into the earth, beyond the hand. And come back to neutral.

And just let both arms lift, and as they go past eye height, let the eyes lift. Look beyond both hands, and you're also feeling you're coming out of your pelvis. It's like we're working within the lesson yesterday — coming out of your pelvis and down into the earth, so that you're not losing the connection downward.

We are of the earth and of the sky, reaching in both directions.

Now, just feel how a few moments of lifting your arms consciously influences your whole standing.

One more time. Soft bend in the knees, coming up. Feel yourself come up out of your pelvis, gazing beyond into the sky, and extending consciousness also into the earth.

And again, lower down. And just walk a little bit, and move around, not just in one place.

[Participant:] Probably not at this moment, but remind me to get back.

[Russell:] Just pause wherever you are, unless you want to be in the sun and you're not.

[Participant:] Right.

Turning

[Russell:] Right. And so, let the feet get a little wider than the pelvis, and as you turn, stay to the right. The left heel lifts. Let your head come around to look around yourself, letting your chest and shoulders turn right. Your whole self turning right, including feeling your eyeballs turn right. Your shoulders, your chest, your pelvis. Your knees soften. The left heel lifts.

And then just let your head come back to the left, your head and eyes back to the left. Let everything else stay at ease.

Let your head and eyes go to the right. And then just your shoulders go right. Feel the left shoulder going a little backwards as well. Just the shoulders, not the head.

The shoulders come back. But the head — feel it might have more space rightward. But just the eyes go to the left. And back to the right. And to the left. And to the right.

Let the whole self come back to neutral. Just feel the whole orientation of yourself. Feel how the whole spine, the whole organism, is oriented a little bit differently.

And then just turn to your right. Feel the quality. Good. Come back to neutral. Shift your weight a little bit.

Walk, if you like. Just be awake to the ground and to your length upward. Right? A lot of us have a habit, when we're not paying attention, we begin to pull down. Begin to orient our eyes downward, chest downward. Some of us have an opposite habit, but this is a common one. Just want to let the thought of the upward gravity help you as well.

Let's stand again. And come leftward. Let everything turn, the knees be at ease, the right heel lift. And just gently let the head and eyes come back to the right. Let the arms be at ease. They're to the left, but they're at ease. The head to the right, and then back to the left, and the head back to the right.

And notice if you can move the eyes opposite to the head. As you turn your head, you're moving the eyes in the opposite direction. You're still breathing — or you're not, and you know it.

Good. Come back to neutral. Come again to your left. Look around yourself. Keep your head and pelvis where they are. Just bring your shoulders to the right, and your shoulders back to the left. Go smooth and slow, keeping your head looking left, your eyes left, and your shoulders going back and forth. Your arms will move through space as well.

That's it. Bring everything back to neutral.

And then once again, just turn and look around you, so you feel the quality and range of your turning. Go to the right again, go to the left, go all around yourself. Feel that quality through your whole spine. Great.

Okay, and then once again, just come to standing.

Witnessing

[Russell:] Feel through your heels. Remember those images of the calcaneus bones.

Can you even imagine your hip joints — not the outside, not the trochanters, but actually very internal, deep in here. Imagining those hip joints, organize your feet so that they feel more or less under your hip joints. So just four or five inches between them, maybe three or four inches.

And sense into the earth and up towards the sky. Lightly, just bounce your heels. Just let it resonate through you. Let your spine receive a gentle movement. Lift and lower your heel.

And just notice how you can shift your consciousness to observe the one standing there. How you can shift consciousness to be with the one you call yourself.

Notice, is it possible to shift consciousness out of the physical body? And noticing — oh, you're standing there, as if you are right behind, or next to, or in front of, or above, but somehow not inside. Notice if you can sense that movement.

Then notice how you can come right into the feet, being alive to the feet. The legs being alive to the legs. The hands being alive within themselves. Some sense of the spine, or neck.

Then again, notice this move of consciousness, where one could be as if outside, noticing the one there. See if that makes any internal sense, if you can feel something, or if that just seems like an abstraction.

You can actually be with the one standing there. You have access to how it feels inside, physically, feeling-wise.

And again, just sense, bringing attention into the body, sensing yourself throughout your physicality.

There might also be a moment — do this experiment — if you can be both inside and around. See if anything comes for you with that. That you can be perceiving simultaneously within the bodily experience, and be with the bodily experience.

Coming inside

[Russell:] Keep your eyes open, and let's go back inside.

I'm observing the place inside that makes himself serious. What I mean is, I'm observing the place inside that takes himself seriously.

The way it came in that moment was, I saw that Wendy went downstairs, and I'm assuming she could connect with Bob around some of the stuff they're dealing with. And there was this place that really wants them here for the next round of what's happening, and that brought up that place inside that gets attached to it.

If somebody — like when Peter was missing this morning, and here the conversation was going on, and there's a part of me that just — And then that part starts thinking, wow, these things are really important. And then it starts becoming a little identity around importance, and then it just cracks me up. You know what I mean?

So, I mean, it's all good. It's just interesting to observe those formations, right? And they come and go really quickly, huh?

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Participant:] The stem cells underneath that.

[Russell:] There we go. So, Peter.

[Participant:] Hi.

Briefly, I'd like to say two things. One is that I'll write something and fill you in — probably more from me than the details. So stay posted on that. And it's important, because it's useful a number of times to slow down, breathe, and hopefully not make things worse.

[Russell:] Yeah, yeah.

[Participant:] And — a guest house. Every morning. Some momentary awareness comes as an unexpected gift. Welcome and entertain them, even if they're a crowd of thieves. They may be clearing you out.

And I really, really felt from the get-go, it couldn't have happened in a place with a better bunch of people. And the bonus is that when we entered the car, there was my wallet and my ID card. They took the cash.

[Russell:] Oh, what a blessing.

[Participant:] So, you know. Yeah, so I've got a broken window, and we can work on some details. It's doable, and the car works, and it's a teachable moment. Mostly, it feels mostly in the finite qualities right now, but I'll write about it.

[Russell:] Yeah. Right, right.

[Participant:] And, you know, Bob and Wendy are comfortable — or at least, they're dealing with a lot of stuff.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant:] And, you know, the sheriff told me they've had a rash of such incidents last night on the road. He suspects it's wayward youth. So, you know, it's kind of just a softball. Thanks a lot, and thanks for any details. Actually, I don't want to make it an excessive focus, so we can move on. And I'll be processing it, and I'll be happy to share it, because I have lots of stories about wayward youth.

[Russell:] I think you're going to have company for lunch.

[Participant:] I only got that far.

[Participant:] Praise the guests, and they come from beyond.

[Russell:] Yes. Well, that's perfect.

Presencing

[Russell:] So, close your eyes for a moment, and notice if you can sense, as you drop down — as you let the thoughts go, the stories go, and drop into this moment, using your body as a way of finding this moment.

Just notice if you can recall your resource of presencing from last night, that presence moment. If you can use any of the images, keywords, key sensations, and or gestures, to remind your body of that sense. Take a few moments to see if there's some kind of shift that occurred.

As you sense the qualities of presence, if they're starting to form, already be here. Staying in touch with your bodily experience, say something out loud about what it feels like in yourself in a moment of presence.

[Participant:] Expansive.

[Russell:] And as you hear them, check your experience. Again, we're taking the words into our body and seeing what resonates, what's known there. Expansive.

[Participant:] Calmly energized.

[Russell:] Calmly energized. Let's go a little bit slower, I'm sorry. Just so that we can take a moment to kind of taste it in our bodies. Just a bit longer.

[Participant:] Moving alive.

[Russell:] Moving alive.

[Participant:] Vitality.

[Russell:] Vitality.

[Participant:] Tingling pulsation.

[Russell:] Tingling pulsation.

[Participant:] Soft wornness.

[Russell:] Soft wornness.

[Participant:] Peacefully awake.

[Russell:] Peacefully awake.

Let's just rest here, in whatever qualities you can sense that are in the direction of your sense of being present in a moment. Noticing if you can have that presence for this moment of living together.

And I'm going to invite a kind of cousin of presencing, a sister or brother. It's very close to presencing, but adds some other qualities. I'd like to explore, in this inner way, the sense of deep listening. The quality of deep listening.

And I invite you to encourage your inner life to bring some memory. It could be a specific moment, or an amalgam, where you felt really listened to in a way that's satisfying. A way that felt like, I'm really taken in here. I'm really received in a way that feels right. Not at a moment when you're seeking advice, or being told something, but just being received.

And it could be that it's one person in a number of different situations, or it could be one moment, a certain place. Just see what comes.

If you find one, grow that moment in a sensory-rich way. If you're still not finding one, include the possibility that it's an animal that really listened to you, or some other being. But you had the inner feeling of really being received and heard.

Notice what happens in your body. And also begin to notice what the other person is doing, or not doing, that seems important for you to feel really heard, really received. Just let your body show you what's important — in their words, in their gestures, in their presence, in their mannerisms.

And when you feel ready, please speak to either or both. Something of how it feels in your body to be received, and or something that seems important to you in the way they are with you. Let's take some minutes bringing that outward, so we can all taste it and see if that's true for us.

Deep listening

[Participant:] They're allowing me space to speak my own truth without interrupting.

[Russell:] Again, I'm going to repeat these, to make sure everyone has heard. Space to speak your truth without interrupting in any way.

[Participant:] Soft gaze.

[Participant:] Caring, active silence.

[Participant:] Acknowledged.

[Russell:] Acknowledged. Is that something you're feeling — acknowledged — or they're doing something that's acknowledging of you, or both?

[Participant:] It's a feeling of maybe more like recognition, or acknowledgement.

[Russell:] Yeah. Is there any particular way they let you know that they're recognizing and acknowledging you?

[Participant:] It feels really good when someone says my name the way I like it said.

[Russell:] Someone says your name the way you like it said.

[Participant:] It's basically that my own clarity and truth can emerge.

[Russell:] There's a space in which your own clarity and truth — and I'm curious if you can sense how it feels when you're in that kind of space. What it's like, and how your body knows it's in that space.

Yeah, I see your hand touching your chest, heart and chest. There's an openness and a relaxing in the body, no tension. Yeah.

[Participant:] My hands — one hand is folded into the other. Fingers are blessed. It's a gesture that says, I am not moving until you're finished.

[Russell:] A gesture in the hands, one over the other, that's saying, I'm not moving till you're finished. Add to that, if it would feel right — there's no time pressure. There's a sense of, you have the time you need.

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Participant:] Sensing your breath in that, and an ease of breathing, in both.

[Participant:] They occasionally mirror back, or repeat what they're hearing, to see if it resonates with what I'm saying.

[Russell:] So it feels right to receive back some of your words. See if they're really hearing you.

[Participant:] They express an authentic curiosity about how this moment — the periphery can widen, or the horizon can widen — so that it becomes a moment of learning or joy in the future. A bridge to future possibilities.

[Russell:] The way in which they're bridging this moment, opening and widening into future possibilities.

[Participant:] A body posture, leaning forward, touching your hand, and they say, I'm really with you, I hear you, I'm right with you.

[Participant:] I'm feeling inside myself, noticing my own untruth, and dropping into truth. Powered by the witnessing.

[Russell:] There's some sense in yourself that the untruth can be noticed, and there's a sense of dropping into something that feels true. There's even maybe a physical sense of that. I noticed your hand moving, and — like, yeah. A dropping into. Yeah, nice.

[Participant:] Surprise. Something like melting.

[Russell:] Yeah. You surprise yourself when you're really being listened to. Let something new come.

[Participant:] Tentatively, silently, mutually.

[Russell:] Tentatively, silently, mutually.

Wait. Let's just pause here, and as you're sensing how your body feels really listened to, and some of the qualities that help that.

I'll add some other words that seemed to be behind some of the words. That there's a sense of accepting. A complete lack of judgmentalness. A sense of warm-hearted safety. You could call it a welcoming.

And notice, in your reflection right now, how often do you bring that quality of listening to your inner life? Can you imagine what it might be like to have that quality of being present with what's alive in you, as you would like someone to be present with you?

Just sit with that. With the feeling of this in your body, and just the imagination. What might it be like to turn that kind of listening — warmheartedness. Absolutely no question about you needing to be better or different.

[Silence 41 seconds]

One last time, as you're sitting with all this, we'll invite what may be slightly different, or maybe really very much the same — the sister, brother, cousin called presence. You're just presence throughout yourself, listening to the moment. Listening to what arises within and around you, with an atmosphere that whatever comes, I will greet it at the door, and invite it in.

There's no requirement to like everything that comes. It's more a sense of a welcoming. That this is here, and I will be with it. And there's a warmth. Curiosity. No need to make it different or better.

Let your attention come to just feeling it. You're sitting here, welcoming the sensations of sitting. If there's something uncomfortable in the body, say hello. I know you're there. I'm with you. It's welcoming.

Let your eyes open.

So, we're going to end the morning on this quality, and we'll be continuing from here, investigating what it's like to actually cultivate this kind of inner relationship. What can support that kind of inner relationship. And out of that will come the beginnings of what is sometimes called focusing.

But for me — and I'll tell you a little about my history of this, working with this, discovering this, because I was actually focusing before I knew focusing. That's why I teach it the way I do, because it began as a naturalistic process. So I teach it in a naturalistic way. And then I'll also tell you about some of the ways different people, who worked with it for a long time, have certain helpful steps. But I first want us to feel how natural it can be to listen to ourselves this way.

Thank you.

[Participant:] Please. Yeah, we have two cards on the table over here. One for Rinda, a thank you card.

[Russell:] Oh, that's so dear.

[Participant:] And the other for —