Practice

Angela 2 — Week 2, Day 1, Session 4 — 29 minutes

Summary: Standing, the group senses ground, uplift, and a golden ball at the center, with breath and the space around. Russell acknowledges who is not continuing, names five basic embodied qualities, then teaches listening speaking — pause, update, and say only what feels right. He models five minutes, and pairs begin.

Ground

[Russell:] Stand together.

Take the most obvious. There's a ground here. Feel that.

Be awake to these most basic. There's a ground.

So if you wait a little bit, so that there's a kind of invitation, we could say, through your feet and through your legs, for connecting down, and also maybe even something like receiving. And maybe there's something in us that's a little bit plant-like or tree-like, and that there's a connecting downward, which includes a receiving, a welcoming.

Last time we — shift your weight as I speak — last time we spent much time, as I said last night, growing the sense of the ground and our connection to the ground, our awakeness to the ground. And that's such a key theme forever, seems to me, as long as we are embodied.

And I just can't emphasize enough, in my experience, how the bodily habit — let's say, the healthy bodily habit — of dropping down. The feeling, I'm here, I'm on this spot. I really am on this spot.

You know, it's so basic that it's so easy to skip over. It's like a fish in water. It really requires some — for a while, it requires some very intentional remembering that even as we get into our being more embodied, the tendency is to go more into how it feels, you know, closer to emotion, or closer even to felt sensing.

And I want to go to the very basis, the infrastructure of our experiencing. It has surprising value.

So to feel this sense of the ground, and immediately with that, or even as one thing sometimes, is that up? Is that up? That it's not one or the other. It's actually a harmonious whole called your verticality.

Your verticality, that has a grounded aspect and an uplifted aspect. And for those to be in harmony says a lot about our living.

And sometimes it's just noticing, I'm really not grounded, and being real conscious of that. Sometimes it's the — wow, I'm really heavy today and I don't have much uplift.

Yeah, but this dimension, too, when one is not particularly heavy or particularly lifted, to cultivate an interest in ground.

Just even a little bit of movement. Plus, in sitting it can be, and standing.

Very strong theme this week.

How many people got to print out the materials that we sent out?

How many people did not — did not print out the materials? They don't know what the materials they wanted to read are.

Okay, you read them but didn't print.

How many have no idea what I'm talking about?

Does anybody not see any of the materials?

Okay. Excuse me?

The center

[Participant:] Yes, I found this article. There was a motor development article in there. There were kind of ideas about the week.

[Russell:] So this idea of centering and breathing, really central for us. And we touched it before, this picture of the golden ball. And we'll go much more deeply into that.

But just place a hand about two inches below your belly button, and the back of the other hand behind, on your sacrum.

And just shifting a little bit left and right, as if this is where the movement of your whole self is being invited from.

So as if — if that image works for you, of a ball here, and I'll give you more detail on that a little bit later. Use that. But there's something here between your hands.

Anytime we're doing this and your hands get even a little bit tired, just switch over. You'll find a deep relief.

And then the turning movement, you can let the heel lift that you're turning away from.

Feeling that there's something alive in your center. Turning.

Pause.

Maybe close your eyes for a moment, and you have this ground and this upward feeling, or interest — this centering, this golden ball, this middle.

The breath, the breathing.

And all of these can be sensed individually. There can also be the sense of all of that living together.

Shifting your weight so you're not stuck in one place, but where we let the balancing functions, the shifting, the weightedness, enliven you in these subtle ways. Get those joint receptors responding, activated.

And even as you're standing, you're shifting, sensing with your eyes closed, if that's comfortable. If balance is an issue, then you can have your eyes open.

And including something about the space around you. There's a feeling that you can extend your attention, not through looking, but through opening attention. It can include the space around your body.

We're always both in a body and in a space, and our brain is constantly mapping those territories.

Coming closer

And let's come in closer for a little. We're gonna sit, put some things together. Got a bunch of things I wanna do this morning.

I'd like to acknowledge, as I said, Barbara Scott's not here. She'll be coming actually around lunchtime.

And Myra Wilkinson, who was here last time, and Joan David, who were here last time, are not continuing with us. And they were still part of our fabric, so to be included with our best wishes.

Yeah. I have confidence that they're in the place they need to be.

And is there anything that you're needing about their not being here? Anything that feels incomplete, or feels like you're carrying something about them that would feel better for you?

Five qualities

So these qualities that we just briefly went through are what I think of as the five most basic embodied qualities that we'll be cultivating.

As a ground state. That's actually our first three weeks of the course. We go through these in a kind of order, and then from there grow out into other qualities.

So the first week we were working with the sense of down and up, or grounding and the uplift, how those live in the human body, and more importantly, we could say, or equally, or somehow inseparable from how that's living in the human being — in the human being's living. And how important those directions are.

It's not irrelevant or haphazard that we are vertical, and that evolution has taken a vertical direction.

And the verticality of our spine, as we will see over time, is a rather significant event on many levels.

And then this cultivating of the center here, this particular center — not the only center we'll be working with, but a very, very important center.

And as we work with this center, it's also a good time to bring awareness of breathing, which is a great ally in the process of awakening. A great ally in the process of awakening, to have breath as part of our spontaneous sensing of self.

These practices begin with intentionality, and as they unfold, become hopefully more and more spontaneous. That there isn't effort. That that's part of the living experience, not as a layering on top of our experience, but — it's just there, as that quality.

Then the final one, that will be our focus for our third week, of course, has to do with spaciousness. It has to do with outer space, sensing into the world, how we move through space, and inner spaces, cultivating the spaciousness within the body.

And all that brings up all these issues of our boundaries, and permeability of our boundaries. And where we're maybe, in some of our relationships, confused about the boundaries that feel most life-giving.

Some of us have certain habits that are about, here, you know, shut off or spilling over. Those would be things for next week.

Materials

So a couple of things I want to say.

If you have the materials with you, we might — that's a great thing. If you don't have the materials available to you, how many people do not have the reading materials available? Wait. In your computer? And there — is your computer here?

Okay, so who does not have them on a computer, or present?

Okay, so we'll get you.

No, no, no, no. No. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Yeah, I just — if I'm referring to them, it's not even that you absolutely need them in the room or something. It's just that it might be that your curiosity gets stimulated because we're looking at something. I didn't want it to feel like, what's he talking about?

Great. And so the copy of the packet — you can read an article, put it back, someone else can get it, that kind. That's one thing. It was the last one.

Okay. Great.

Names

And so the next thing I want to say is, it's likely that you don't remember everyone's name. And I encourage you not to be embarrassed about that. But for some people names stay with you, for some don't, and we will — not at this moment. We will, later this morning, have an opportunity to learn each other's names again.

And I encourage you to use the photos. The photos are linked to the names, which tend to be linked to the person, so that might help you recall names.

Names are important.

Listening speaking

So what I'd like to do right now is a kind of a process in itself, and a modeling for some of the dominant themes of this week, which have to do with a quality of listening. Quality of listening.

Learning how we can listen to ourselves, how we can listen to our inner life, to our connection to the world around us, how to listen to each other.

It all begins with this capacity for really listening to what's living in us.

So it's a process I call listening speaking. Listening speaking. And it actually goes on. It's listening speaking, listening speaking, listening speaking.

In other words, on the one hand, sometimes listening and speaking follow each other in linear time. And there's also a process I think of as listening speaking, which is one thing.

And how we develop the capacity to actually have listening connected to our speaking.

And I would suggest that for most of us, they get separated. And so most of the time when we're sharing what's alive with us, even when we're sharing it with ourselves, we're lost in the story about what had happened before, or what we knew about it a second ago.

You get what I mean?

And what I'm interested in is the living process of listening speaking, so that there is the opportunity for a consistent updating and self-correcting, and that there's a permeability.

I would say this capacity for listening speaking is the ground from which, say, a process like focusing came. It's this kind of in-touchness.

And so I want to go back before there were forms or processes — what it means to sense into, interrupt ourselves at times.

Sometimes everyone's going to have different rhythms, and different conversations have different rhythms. It's not that there's one way to listen speak. It's always changing.

Like when something is significant to us. Sometimes it's nice to chit-chat and, you know, the listening can go a little bit in the background. Maybe we'll listen to the other, but listening to ourselves maybe goes into the background.

But when something is important to us, to be able to have, more and more often, the simultaneity. And to lead to the simultaneity, the key step, golden step, which we talked about last time and we'll continue to talk about every time, is learning to pause.

Learning to pause in our own inner conversations, and when we're having something that's important to us. To be able to be updating, kind of hot off the press. How is it really?

Because I so often find that I'm unintentionally not telling the truth. I'm telling what was true, but not what is true.

It's not some maliciousness or something. It's just — I need the update.

So the way I'd like to start this part of our adventure is actually with a brief process that we'll do in pairs, and I'm gonna model it first, and gonna invite a kind of reflecting — inviting our inner life to reflect on how I am on my path right now, how I am with the embodied life work.

It can be something — maybe the embodied life work feels like part of a larger path, maybe it feels central in your path. It can also include anything that's living in you right now about your life, anything that's wanting to come.

And it's very important that you not say anything that doesn't feel really great to say out loud, right? It's not better to disclose intimate things when something inside feels awkward about it. You know, so one could say something like, well, there's something in my life, I don't really want

to specify it right now, but I'm sensing that that's really being worked with right now. That's alive in me.

Do you get what I mean?

So you don't — this kind of '70s, '80s picture, '60s, '70s picture or something, I don't know — self-disclosure being authentic, and not self-disclosing being something inauthentic. There's really a violence to our inner life, in my opinion.

Five minutes

So I don't know what I'm gonna say yet, but what I want somebody to do is to time me for five minutes. Who's willing to time me for five minutes?

Time me for five minutes. Tell me when it's four minutes, so I know that.

So I'm going to bring to my inner life: how am I with this path, with anything that's living in my life right now? What is alive in here, as I'm in this embodied life work? All of that.

First, it just feels kind of overwhelming, too. That said, I need to drop down into myself.

What really — so I noticed, up until this moment I was talking to you, and so now I really need to emphasize the listening in.

There's a flutteriness. There's an excitement that has a little nervous quality.

Feels like this. Like things are getting bigger, opening.

Now, that feels both — both in the teaching of this work and in my inner realizations.

And there's something unknown. Is that right? Yeah, unknown. A little — very exciting, and a little — there's a nervousness in it. So nervousness isn't just right. It's a — but it's like that. It's uncertainty. Shaky.

And right now I'm not trying to work on anything. I'm just wanting to see. So this is interesting, this coming.

There's something about bringing the work out in the world. It's taking another level. And again, it's been here on and off lately.

Yeah. So, and there's something — my daughter all of a sudden pops in, and there's something. What is that?

See, right there. I knew before, but what is it now?

Very, very close, and there's something — something disturbed in the dynamic of the three of us that needs some work, needs some clarity. Something feels murky.

And feel — one-on-one I feel clarity. Three of us, I feel murky.

Yeah, that's wanting some attention. I notice that it's wanting to unfold.

I just noticed my inner life is really enjoying just this open invitation.

Somehow speaking it out loud with people around is still different than just speaking it to myself.

[Participant:] Four minutes.

[Russell:] So there is a full excitement. The nervousness is not there, but there's a lot of uncertainty. What's next? What's coming? It feels big. Feels like a big time.

Yeah, that feels good. Great.

Thank you for listening.

In pairs

Okay, so you get the idea? Yours, of course, will be very different. It'll be yours. But pauses are essential.

Fresh updates, hot off the press. No saying anything, subject-wise, that doesn't feel good. You can just say, well, there's something I'm in touch with that feels important. That's great. That's not less than. Just that your inner life is being acknowledged for what's living in there.

I find these processes so helpful for the kind of unfolding that happens under the ground.

There's so much of the important development in my life, and what I observe in people I work with, is not what we're consciously working on, but what we bring up and let it be worked with.

And then you do your practices and they get worked with. Sometimes there's a conscious insight, but sometimes just — letting the inner life — oh, this is — I'm in touch with that at all levels, that that's something that's wanting some direction.

Okay, thank you. And then I go about doing my awakening processes, and it somehow gets snagged.

Okay, so please find a partner. Let them know your name.

Okay, and we're gonna take five minutes each.

If you don't have a watch, let me know. I can lend you a clock.