Talk

Angela 2 — Week 2, Day 3, Session 4 — 95 minutes

Summary: Standing, the group senses ground, height, and width, then the meeting of the two. Russell teaches presence as being in an experience and with it, and how a disconnected I collapses into the story. The group explores empathy and the substitute self, then practices warm-hearted clarity — seeing without fixing.

Easing into the ground

[Russell:] With a feeling of easing into the ground on this. Some give in the legs.

Doesn't mean there can't be — like, some yogis like to do a kind of pulling up in the legs, which can give a kind of tone to the legs. But I recommend that not to stay there too long. Let the feeling of the earth, let a softening in relation to the earth, rather than a pulling up, be more familiar.

And just that we get into that bodily knowing of the ground, standing and sitting, lying. We do it consciously so that it can become a spontaneous part of your living. That your body includes something, that you're standing. That you actually don't think, most of the time, functionally, of your body as separate from what you're standing on.

We also want the sense of physical boundary, right? Certain situations, that's very helpful. But in terms of our living awareness, to have our continuity with the world. You're not walled off. It's really such a different feeling of living. In a surprising way.

Just having a conscious sense of the ground, and then it recedes, and then it's just there. It's kind of like your hands and your feet, and there's a ground. That's how it is.

Feeling of exhaling up, pausing, feeling all the way through yourself, and then inhaling down, staying vertical, sinking through, pausing, exhale.

Think from way above you, as if the air comes down through your skull, through your spine, through your pelvis, into the earth.

Thinking out the top. Fingers.

Sense this verticality and depth. Dimension of height and depth.

Fingertips toward your chest.

Paint an image as if you're on a beach, looking out at the water, and there's a feeling of inhaling, widening, pausing, pausing, as if you're sending the water out, and exhaling, the water comes towards you.

Inhaling, the water goes out.

And pause in this width, from fingertips outward, the width of your chest, the width of space, and then back towards you.

Shoulders don't need lifting, lengthening. Stop.

And once again, extending consciousness out in the horizon.

The cross

This horizontal dimension, about our width, our span, seat of our wide interest in this plane. About our heights and depths.

They meet. That cross is such a powerful symbol of the meeting.

And classically, this is the timeless realm of, in the Zen world, called emptiness or wisdom. And this is the world of time.

And there's this meeting, in that present moment, of the horizontal — the width, the span of our life, the span of how we connect with other people on a daily basis, the range of our interests. That we want a good sense of being able to have a wide view.

But width without depth lacks a sense of gravitas, of meaning. And depth and height without width tends to lack compassion. Connection with others, ordinary life, everyday situations.

This is more our everyday world. And if we get only lost in this, then it's just one thing after another. Just doing the dishes, taking out the garbage, and wondering why everybody's making our life so difficult. That's getting lost in the horizontal.

Getting lost in the vertical is when you just don't want to deal with anything. You just want to meditate the rest of your life.

One foot forward

So let's actually do another pattern here, which is, one foot forward, getting the hands to the chest. Lighten.

Again, this feeling of inhale, and coming forward.

And really, over that front foot, you have the vertical and the horizontal. You're wide and tall, connected to the earth and the sky. Exhale.

Forward, coming towards your back foot, letting the front — and actually letting the front heel. Okay, I think that's coming out just a bit, not tense, but.

Extending into space. Reminding. Go here.

Noticing any excess tension in the shoulders, any shortening in the neck. You're letting yourself be on that foot and leg.

Yeah.

Bad influence.

Being the ocean

Interesting to experiment with being the ocean, looking towards the shore. And it's as if we are bringing — as we inhale, we're bringing the water back toward you. And then you're exhaling, sending the water towards the shore.

Be the ocean, and you're looking out at all these beings on the shore.

You pull the water back towards you. You're building up this capacity for the next moment of —

[Silence 36 seconds]

Enjoy that moment of hope.

Good, thank you. Good stuff.

I am here

Let's come over. In this third, I think I want to talk a little, and I might end up writing a little bit.

So just feel the influence of just bringing in the vertical and the horizontal.

Just sense how you're connected to yourself right now, beginning with your physical body. Just, I am. I am here. I am here, just letting that sense. Basic, basic, basic sense.

I can imagine that feeling. I actually have some kind of bodily memory, but I'm not clear on it. I can certainly imagine the feeling of that movement, from the floating in one's mother. Other beings floating in space, until you're floating in your mother.

But the sense of boundarylessness, and that gravity that is immediately here when we come out of the water environment, and feel that.

And the sense of this. Anyone — I don't know if any of you have experienced sensory deprivation things, but I spent a long time in them years ago, and there can be this great inner sense of complete absence of boundary, where one is no longer identified as a physical being. Consciousness is still present, but the boundary of the body becomes a thought. And it's the sense of open space, and this movement to locating consciousness in a place.

On the one hand, we can say, when you're in the spaciousness, oh, how unfortunate, because that spaciousness can feel so wonderful. But on the other hand, what a great, great gift. What a great gift to locate self in a place, and not be all over, but to be here.

And there are just certain kinds of learning that seem to be able to occur in here, in this spot, in this place, in this body. And that feeling of weightedness, of coming into form, of I'm here, I am, I am. That I am experience, that is, I believe, intimately connected to the feeling of this body relating to this body.

The form that happens because this body and this body are related. The relative solidness of this form, the earth element of this form, takes all that calcium, all those minerals, that same stuff as this is here. And that that is not a trivial event in terms of the location of self.

And so just to sense you're here, on this spot.

Again, I just so encourage a returning to that simplicity that is an infrastructure for any other states that are going on in that world. But that is always under it, or in it, or around it, or housing it, or something.

[Participant:] Say it again.

[Russell:] Yeah. That it keeps that infrastructure. And what I find so helpful is both the sense of spaciousness and the sense of I'm here in this spot.

Now, whatever situations are arising for me, on the horizontal plane of my living, I can relate to. I can work with. But when I don't have this, in that sense, I get collapsed into the situation, and the narrow band of restlessness contracts on itself. And I feel, at least for a little while, very little option, very little possibility, and my breathing gets — my body shrinks, there's a collapsing.

And I've noticed it just so very helpful to keep coming back to that ground of the moment. In non-challenging moments, so then in challenging moments, I've got some resource there. I'm not beginning it when things are bearing down on me.

On the floor

[Participant:] Yesterday evening, my first experience with Authentic Movement. So, spent the first part of it napping on the floor. And because there's so much of your body that's on the floor when you're on the floor, there was a sense of, oh, I can move here and there. When I decided to stand up, I felt much more unsure of what was going on. And I thought, it's interesting we've evolved from creatures with four legs, much more connected to the ground.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant:] And we probably haven't gotten used to this not being connected. I mean, really, I was saying this evolutionarily. Connection through the animal world.

[Russell:] Yeah, yeah.

[Participant:] Because we don't spend a lot of time, except in bed, moving on the ground. But babies do. I mean, I think how babies begin their life, they're much more on the ground.

[Russell:] Right.

[Participant:] So I'm just appreciating the fact that maybe we leave the ground too soon.

[Russell:] Yeah. Yeah.

Well, that was one of Feldenkrais's real basic insights, was that we need to come back to the ground to do a lot of our infrastructure learning. Both in the sense of connection to self, but also in terms of motor patterns, because when we're standing, we're so unstable that most of our nervous system gets involved in not falling. And so it's not free for new patterns.

So you're right on. You're right on that.

Dynamic stability

And that sense of the evolutionary aspect, I want to just affirm that, that you're bringing that, because it really is, I believe, not at all coincidental that the evolution of consciousness — the

capacity to see far, and to come away from the earth, but now to be able to, through our awareness, have a living connection to the earth, but less bounded to it. Right?

Because every child growing up, the world grows at every stage of motor development, right? Their world. We wouldn't want our kids to stay lying in their cribs, right? Every time they can do something new, it means they can cover more territory. It's scarier for those of us around them, because now they can not only roll over, but they can get across the room. And then when they get on two legs, well, now they can cover a lot of territory.

But that whole progression, the evolution of movement, which we can see through the animal species developing, and then coming onto these two legs, really is connected to this higher cortex growing.

And look what happens in the world when you go from — and there's some really nice theory. This might be too theoretical, but I'll give it to you anyway. Really nice theories about the way Neanderthal, much thicker, connected to the ground much more, still two-legged, but, you know, probably coming more down frequently, and much thicker bodies. The movement toward Homo erectus had this lifting further away from the ground, getting longer, and able to cover more ground, able to now run. Neanderthals weren't good runners. They could cover little ground in fast times, but they couldn't run distance.

There's a very interesting evolutionary theory that it's the capacity to run across the plains that began the functions of being able to plan out how to get a gazelle separated from a herd, and with your three or four hunting partners, how to plan. It might be a two-day run. How to spell each other, how to get location in space, timing, strategy. All these cortical functions growing out of, well, now you're on two legs.

It's not only that you have tools. Everyone knew about tools, in terms of anthropology, for a long time, and the importance of thumbs and all like that. But this whole picture, that our discriminating functions are connected to this two-leggedness, and the capacity to now cover even more ground.

So you're right onto it, I think, with what you're experiencing. What Feldenkrais talked about is, we don't want just stability. We want dynamic stability. So it's not just about being in a place. It's about having enough support that you can adjust yourself to not fall over. But we don't — actually, standing is not about being still. It's about micro-adjusting, micro-adjusting.

And to sense those micro-adjustments is very, very helpful for our balancing functions, for our joints, to sense those micro-adjustments that are needed for standing.

Still in us

[Participant:] In line with that, it sort of comes from wherever, and then from the amoeba. We have this — from the amoeba, maybe reptilian, from reptilian to more lateral movement. Is the wisdom of why that initially was there still a capacity within us?

So can I, when I'm on the floor, can I actually tap into that consciousness, as when I was — whenever that was? So that's the purpose, maybe, or the capabilities of that structure still in me somewhere?

[Russell:] Sure seems like it to me. Sure seems. I mean, Jean — yeah, yeah, yeah. Jean likes to say, you know, plant bodies have wisdom. They're seeking water, they're seeking light, they're adapting to

situations, they're adapting to when there's less water. This is intelligent living in the plant body. And then he'll say, you're at least as smart as a plant.

But our cells have that as part of our history. Right?

So one of the really interesting things about development is, it seems, when people look at the brain, they go, wow, you'd never design a structure like that if you knew where you were going from the beginning. But it's a lot of kind of — it's like a house that's got a lot of add-ons. And this owner comes in and says, well, we need some of this, but you don't throw away the old. And that's a really important evolutionary principle. The old isn't thrown away. It's incorporated at another level of development.

And yes, so that's in there. It can get superseded, overwhelmed by our neocortical functions. And part of what we're doing with the Feldenkrais work, with the inner listening, Focusing work, with even the meditation, when I talk about integrating these brains — it's taking what is helpful from the evolution of the species of consciousness on this planet, and having them work in connection with each other, these different capacities, instead of fighting each other.

[Participant:] So is it in response, ultimately, to survival? So the humans had a boosting when you walk.

[Russell:] Well, I would say survival is the beginning, but it's not the end. It's always there. We never want to let that go, but it's more. We would have stayed as cockroaches. If survival — if you ever lived in New York.

So. Okay, yeah. This is fascinating subjects, and I want to zero in on some other things right now.

Where we place the I

So, we were sitting. Someone who was sitting made the comment this morning, something like: can thoughts be noticed without identifying as the thinker?

Can thoughts be noticed without saying, I am that thinker? Can feelings be noticed without that becoming the I? Can sensations be noticed?

And this brings a very, very important question. A living question. I'm not thinking a philosophical question. A thinking question for our living is: where do you place the I?

Yeah. Who is the I? Where we place the I is, of course, an implicit question. But how do we locate this I?

And for — I would suggest a few things, and then encourage your deep reflecting about this, because there's a lot in that for how we get confused in our everyday life, how we entrap ourselves, how the cortex disconnects from the rest of the brain and traps us in certain limited pictures of who this I is.

A disconnected I gets us into most of our troubles, and a great, great majority of our illnesses. Very much connected to — what's really interesting — early on, he was both a medical doctor and a paleontologist who lived in Africa, Simeons. And he wrote a book. It was the first brain book I ever read, and it's still impactful on me, called Man's Presumptuous Brain.

And it has to do with looking at how the cortex — he was early on, actually, along with Hans Selye, but early on in looking at stress in the human body. And what he saw early on was that it was the feeling levels of the brain, disconnected from the thinking levels, and the presumption that we identify the I with that thinker who's in charge of everything, and that disconnect from all this neurological input to our organs, to our blood vessels, to our muscles, to the viscera, that creates the conditions of the majority of our dysfunction, physical.

And it was a very important book for me to read as a freshman in college. I think I somehow got to that.

So this very open question. Not one that's, oh, that's where I place the I. It's not like that at all, because it's mobile. There are different situations, different ways that I-ness is helpful and unhelpful in different situations.

Noticing the noticer

Well, just close your eyes for a moment.

There can be a noticing of sitting here, lying here.

There can be a noticing of sound.

Noticing of the bodily sensations.

Can be a noticing of the feeling states that are alive.

Can one gently, subtly notice what is noticing?

One, let go into. There's the noticing, and there's the being awake to the noticer noticing.

Isn't it great? All you gotta do is show up and life will be great.

What the hell is going on?

So we're noticing this noticing.

And so, in that little reading that I gave you of Feldenkrais, which I think is the most important thing he wrote — those four pages I gave you from Feldenkrais — is this distinction between being conscious and being aware. That sense of knowing that one knows. I want to look at this a little further.

In and with

So we're returning to a subject which we got to last time, and we will keep going in layers, for this quality we can call presence.

And right now — and a lot of this hopefully won't be brand new — I like to talk about two aspects of presence. And I call them two. Right from the beginning, I want to say that they are one originally, and two, and one and two. They can be experienced in the same moment, but very often there is a back and forth. And I will describe this to you so it becomes a little bit more clear, and see if this seems helpful. If it doesn't seem helpful, then put it aside.

So presence has these two aspects. One is where we are inside our experience. That we are here, and we know we're here on this spot. When we all say, oh, I really feel present with this, that sense of we're not distracted, we're not all over the place, we're with it, we are in that moment.

Then there is this other quality of presence. And for those who know Ann Cornell's work, she talks about this second quality of presence. She doesn't use presence exactly the same way I did. There's overlap, but there's a difference. And what she likes to emphasize, although she doesn't use this particular word — well, what she will talk about, and what I like to talk about, is that presence can be with something. That presence is that quality, and this is the word that I like to use: witnessing.

Right? This quality of consciousness, this capacity of consciousness to notice what's happening.

The major step in the evolution of consciousness. Major step that I would suggest most Homo sapiens — not completed yet. It's an evolving capacity. It's not complete at all. This capacity for having an experience and knowing we're having the experience.

You know, when people act, and how could they do such a thing? There's often this gap in the self-reflective capacity. It's a significant stage that, again, from Feldenkrais's point of view, we are just, in some ways, beginning our growth in this capacity for awareness. He saw it as really accelerating, which I agree with, at least in pockets. And that it is essential for our survival, this witnessing, this ability to notice.

So presence in its entirety, for me — I use it almost pretty much interchangeably with awareness. It has both sides. It has the capacity to be in one's experience and with one's experience. In and with.

My experience, when life is flowing, when there's a good sense of in-touchness, in and with live together. It's not a this and a that. It's intrinsically awake. Can you get that picture?

And these are, again — I'm presenting this for your reflection, not for swallowing, for you to work with.

So this is a very important idea. Intrinsically awake.

I don't know if you've experienced it, sometimes on your cushion, sometimes just in everyday life, where in a really simple way — and this happens often when you're doing something that you feel you're enjoying, you're good at, or a hobby — there are certainly moments where you might call it your flowing. Or there's a natural, spontaneous sense of being in touch with the moment, being in touch in yourself, and being able to see oneself.

So, in our listening world, what I notice is that when the in gets separate from the with, we tend to get lost in the horizontal. We get lost in the momentary experience, in the emotion, in the bodily sensations, in the problem that we're dealing with. And generally, when in is separate from with, there's a feeling of — how do I want to call it — it's a sense of being stuck. One of my favorite words, stuck. That bodily sense of like there's no way out of this. It's a pretty contracted feeling.

When with gets separated from in, there's a great distancing from the experience, from the situation.

Archetypically — not man and woman, but archetypically — the feminine tends to get in experience. The masculine tends to be with experience. The masculine — happy Father's Day, everybody. The father energy, when it is functioning well, has this capacity to reflect, to stand, to shine light upon, stand with, stand up for. When it gets disconnected, it can get distancing, and a certain kind of judgmentalness from afar. And you don't live up to my standards, and everybody's trying to

please their father, and they can never do it, because the father's trying to please his father, he doesn't know it, and, you know, so.

So, the in and the with.

The imaginary universe

Because one of the things that happens when we're lost in our story is this substitute world, the substitute life, becomes real. The world living in your head becomes actual. And our behaviors, when we are responding to that, and it's disconnected from the rest, are unreliable.

Now, we want the capacity for reflecting and for seeing it, but we want it in connection.

And just to use an example from my life recently. I would say most of the time I feel myself living from a sense of connectedness. And I had a — so it stood out for me — a really strong disconnection, connected to my daughter, where there were things I was concerned about. That's fine, fatherly energy, concerned about things. I want that part of myself alive that gets concerned. And I began to cultivate a picture in my mind about a problem.

And then — and this was very unusual for our relationship — without going to her directly and interacting, which is where we normally work with things, I was relating to the problem that I had created in my head. And unfortunately, my spouse and I were growing it together. And so there was a kind of disconnection from the whole.

And what would normally happen, which is, oh, honey, I've got a certain concern, I want to speak about it — it became a kind of old state that I haven't felt in a long time. It was like a father, you know, I'm really worried about — you know, just a completely disconnected conversation that we then worked ourselves through.

But I realized that, oh, wow, it's so easy to fall into this imaginary universe.

And I'm saying that to let you know, for those who feel like, God, it's really hard. Yeah, I've been doing this a long time, and I get tripped up.

And the direction of wholeness — what rescued me, of course, was just the interaction we had. I could immediately see what I had done, that I was disconnected from self. Honey, honey, honey, I need a minute. I'm really amazed at how lost I got. So, and then the connecting with myself and with her could start. So thank goodness those skills were embedded in there, that we didn't have to perpetuate.

A temporary I

So, in and the with. When we are in the moments of self-listening, there can feel like a kind of back and forth between what I've called before the it that's alive in here, and the presence that's with that it. Right? That's familiar language?

[Participant:] Yes.

[Russell:] So that setup is really, really helpful, to have that picture. It's not ultimately true, but on a horizontal level it's quite helpful to have, oh, I, or this bigger presence, is with something. With this place in here, with this part of me, with this something. And I can have the sense of listening. For it and to it. Right?

So that's a dynamic that we've worked with, that we'll continue to work with. That's a change in our inner life, and in our relatedness.

There can be, we could call it, a temporary I. That's a quality of presence that can be with a temporary it. That's a something that's alive, that's taking form in life, and can be sensed.

And what I notice is that it's really easy for this I to get lost in another identification.

Okay, so — can I comment back on that? Right. So, like when Pete and I were having that interaction a couple of days ago, there was that, when he was really aware of the fact that there was this really vulnerable young place in there. Then there was this other place that really wanted to whip it into shape. And it was really familiar and easy for Pete to put the I in the place that wanted to whip it into shape. You remember that?

Most of us have some very strong attractors, attractors for the substitute I, or the constructed I. Remember that phrase? Right, we have — I sometimes call it substitute self, substitute I, sometimes call it created, sometimes call it conditioned.

And most of us have, you know, it might be the one that has to fix everything. And then all of a sudden we're sitting there talking, well, I really want that part to go away. And then it's so helpful when consciousness can step back and say, oh, there is something in there that really wants to go away.

[Participant:] Yes. Absolutely.

[Russell:] Yeah.

Home plate

[Participant:] I think I need to speak this. Just a — excuse me.

So it seems, at least from what research is going on right now, that we are in the process of becoming Homo empathicus. That the mirror neuron system that's in everybody's brain, where whatever emotional intent you're feeling, when I am connected with you, I feel in my bones.

And it seems that, at least as much as we can tell, that's how we learn, for instance, to hate. So a mother comes in a room and a baby's screaming, and a mother cries like this, and the baby feels in the baby's body. And it seems that that's the beginning of self-hatred.

So the latest discoveries that I'm in touch with is that the human brain, the physical brain itself, has grown as much as it can grow, because if it gets any bigger, it can't be birthed through the mom. So we have thus created a larger system, that open system — call it technology, or whatever, the internet.

So the question that I'm living in is this. What is going to happen? What is happening to us now? It's not even in the future. When our mirror neurons light up with someone else, if it's confusing, what's the I? What happens when our mirror neurons light up with a child who's being run over by a truck in Syria?

And how — where do I locate that I, when my neurological system is an open system, continually being influenced in such a deep way? You know, where's home plate?

[Russell:] Yeah, yeah, yeah. It is an important question.

So this capacity for empathy, that started with the mammalian brain and has grown in evolution, where we moved from only survival of the fittest to a sense of caring being essential for our safety and our unfolding, was a big leap in history.

And now, as Donna's speaking about, there's this capacity within us. Think of it as a capacity, not just that it happens. It's a capacity to empathize, to feel with others. And as with all capacities, it can be helpful for life, and it can begin to work against life. And so it's something — it's like we have some new tools. We're just learning how to navigate with them, how to be open beings that are empathetic.

You know, those of us who read the newspapers, how do we take in these stories and reach for the toast? You know, it's a rather significant question. And do I need to close myself off? And once you've been to a place like Africa or India, you feel closer in certain ways, and you read those stories, and they go more into you, because you have a human connection to these places.

And if we can say that the direction of evolution — and as Moshe said in that brilliant line, I forget the exact words, but the basic point is that we can say that the direction of evolution can be seen as its purpose. Can be seen as its purpose. The direction can be seen, which is a really brilliant understanding, I think. But the direction of evolution can be seen as its purpose.

Yeah, yeah. So what's unfolding is the direction that life is taking. And what is unfolding is this capacity for more and more interconnection, more and more capacity to meet.

So there's this movement of, how can I be an autonomous I that is an interconnected being? That's an edge that we're working with.

This is — the ancient wisdom was about all interconnection. The ancient wisdom, what Buddha was talking about: step off the wheel of the horizontal and just fall into the absolute. All is one. Absolutely true. That has never gotten less true. Let me just finish the sentence.

So that old picture. But then a more recent picture in the West has been this incredible contribution of the development of an autonomous self, of the individual, and growing that capacity. Of course it was always here, but that more and more people can have the freedom to become, to share their gift, their individual gift.

And then this dynamic edge of, how am I completely interconnected with all of life, and honoring the autonomous — could say separate self, or individual self.

I am because you are

[Participant:] A couple of things. I think that we didn't need to justify that. Much of what you're talking about is a Western perspective, and this interconnectedness has existed in indigenous cultures, and in our own cultures, and back far enough that we've moved away from.

[Russell:] That's what I'm saying. Yeah.

[Participant:] Yeah. The indigenous cultures also point to a way back in, in addition to Hinduism. And that, to me — and I'm sure that you agree — is that the tolerance, the ability to be empathic, begins, I might say, with one's empathy not toward one, toward oneself, and also toward one's family, one's ancestors.

And many of us aren't that far away from a lot of ancestral pain that we've separated from, in identifying ourselves as different, as evolved, as new. And that cultivating an ability to somehow be with that which lives within us is central, and is something being encouraged by many teachings that are being shared, in addition to Buddhism.

[Russell:] Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, I think that's really important.

This capacity for interconnection, going back to the first thing you were saying, from indigenous cultures, was — we can say that there was very little sense of the autonomous I, and there was a lot of sense of, you know, I am because you are. I am because you are. And we have that in our history.

And it was also an evolutionary leap, and loss, when the honoring of the individual came to the fore in the Western world first, predominantly.

And our efforts now, getting to your next point, from my point of view, is how do we have that tribal, familial connectedness, working with the pain of that and the capacity of that, and be able to generalize the capacity of care toward more and more life.

And, you know, it's that picture, my picture that I carry anyway, of the attraction of when there's a healthy, functioning mother and child, the bonding, the connecting, the oxytocin that creates this feeling of such care, that existed before human. That oxytocin, that is a bonding chemical, that comes so much in maternity, in, as far as I know, all mammals. Comes in orgasm, comes in those moments of connecting, that is part of the infrastructure of our caring toward another.

And that, for a long time, that extended to limited boundaries, to that tribe and that family. And now there's an opening further. Maybe. Hopefully.

Does that fit?

[Participant:] Some of it.

[Russell:] Okay, yeah. Yes.

[Participant:] Last night I read your — mechanization.

[Russell:] Yes. Yeah. Yeah, I wrote an article in the current newsletter that I sent out, or I sent out yesterday or the day before, something like that. It's a newsletter from the Embodied Life. It was an article. It was on mechanization, technology.

[Participant:] Yeah. Partly about the I and the interconnectedness. And then I see these words — substitute, created, conditioned — and it fits so well with what you were saying.

[Russell:] Yeah. Yeah. And. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

[Participant:] It's such an interesting article.

[Russell:] Yeah. Yeah. Where that's all going. Yeah. I want to move on. Is that okay? Yeah, because I want to make sure we get through to a certain piece.

I am not I

Pete, do you remember the I Am Not I?

Okay, so give us I Am Not I.

[Participant:] It's a poem, by Juan Ramón Jiménez.

I am this one, standing beside me, where I can see. At times I manage to visit, at other times I forget. Remains — how I decide what to speak — and forgives gently, what I eat, walks where I cannot walk, and will remain standing.

[Russell:] So this picture. Thank you.

I am not I.

So, is it already a great opportunity for infusion, and for widening.

I am not I. I am the one standing beside me. I would say also within me, who I do not see.

I would transform that a little bit, like I just did. I am not I. I am the one standing beside me, and within me, who I sometimes see.

And this picture of how I can be both. How I can see the horizontal Russell, being, going through his life, as a subset of a larger I.

But remember, Earth used to be the whole scene, and then we had a planetary system. Well, Earth didn't get any smaller. It just got smaller in the context of the whole. And then we had the galaxy, and Earth didn't change in its size. It just became smaller relative to.

So how we can have, and totally value and honor, like we do this Earth, this body, this thinking, these feelings, these connections to the beings around me — to honor all of that, not to diminish that, but not to get lost in that. How to be in it and with it.

And if your tendency is to get distant from your experience, there needs to be, or I would invite, a coming closer to how it feels in there to be you. If your tendency is to get more lost in the particularity of the moment, the feeling state, the thoughts, then we want to grow out this presence that is with whatever's occurring.

And ultimately, we want that living all together as one thing, that it's intrinsically awake. It's not, oh, now I'm here, now I'm here, now I'm here. It's intrinsically poetic, and intrinsically, we could say, self-organizing.

This gets back to what Donna was pointing toward. It's not a particular self, but it has a capacity for creating functional temporary boundaries that support life.

So this question of, well, who's in charge of all of this? That, I have no idea how to describe. What my experience is, is it's not a solid something, but it is a functioning that has all of this living in it. And to try to make it solid is an error. But to think that it's all vacuous is an error. Maybe. Maybe.

But functionally, what we need now, is when we see the collapsing of the self into a narrow band of self-identity, we want to see it and open our heart towards the one who's suffering in that moment. Because what I notice is, whenever that collapse occurs, there's a sense of, I'm not whole. I've lost much of myself. And I don't want to make it wrong or bad. That's not effective. But I want to be able to shine light, and care. Say, how can I take care of this mind state? And by mind state, I mean body state, feeling state, I mean moment. How can I take care of this mind state in a life-giving way?

And that's what we're learning. You need an infrastructure of a physical body. You don't jump into the stuck place, I suggest. I suggest it's really helpful to have something more neutral around it. That we're able to turn attention toward what feels stuck, or feels like it needs attention.

And for a while there, it's very helpful to have this navigating of back and forth, of sensing it, listening to it, letting a picture or words come, come back to it. And this feeling of going back and forth is a very helpful way of it unfolding.

Life — this is a key insight of Feldenkrais, of Gendlin, of Buddha. Of Buddha, I didn't actually say this. I'm saying Buddha would agree with me.

Life wants to unfold. Evolution isn't haphazard. It's unfolding toward greater complexity, greater levels of organization.

Life wants to unfold. Our work, in the stuck places of our body, relationships, of our feelings, of our whatever, is: how do I bring the kind of relationship to the stuck place? The kind of caring, warm-hearted.

Warm light

Yesterday we did that resource process. What's it called — warm-heartedness. That unconditional positive feeling.

And what I want to suggest is that for the witnessing to be most effective, that needs another quality. Doesn't substitute for this, but adds to this. And the warm-heartedness, when balanced by the objectivity, the quality of shining light on what is there, seeing what is there.

This is, again, archetypically — it's Father's Day, so we need to bring in more of the masculine aspect. That there's this seeing, but it's a warm. Usually we hear objectivity, we hear cold, and something like that. It has this right in it.

It was that picture I was attempting to give this morning, of this being so interested in you, so caring towards you. In some traditions called the guardian angel, that is just with you, is for you, but can't fix you.

And it's not — there are some situations where it's appropriate to bring fixing, recommending, energy into. We're not saying one should always be this quality of witness. But we definitely want well-developed in us this capacity for warm-hearted presence with something.

A dirty little kid

Got something?

[Participant:] I was curious. Last night when I went back home, I had arranged for someone to water my flowers at the back, and they hadn't been done for two days. I just got reactive, and I'm watering the flowers. So I called that person, and I tried to disguise my reactivity a little bit, but it kind of leaked out. I wasn't talking to the person. I was leaving a message. I knew she didn't.

And then I felt bad, and I left another message, kind of apologizing, and kind of saying I was grouchy, blah blah blah.

So last night I had a dream of a little wayward homeless boy, running around with a pack of other boys who kept vomiting. And then he came to me, and he vomited on me. So I took his hand, and

I went to a proprietor of a store in the neighborhood, and I said, what are we going to do with this guy? And by then, the little boy had gone away. He had slipped away.

So I woke up, and I thought, well, the dream's just showing how I was loving when I was reactive. And so intellectually, I kind of got it. And I was shaving, and then I was going to discount the whole dream. That's it.

I was shaving, and this reversal happened, where I said, the boy is that part of me that's disowned. It's homeless. And I related to it in that way of loving kindness. And that's who he is. That's Martin. And it was a hard relationship. And then it changed my whole attitude toward my friend. And then we had to talk.

So for me, that shift, where I saw that this is a part of me, and rather than, oh, vomiting, reactivity, I could embrace it as part of me. It became part of me. And so it's not that it's resolved. He's still —

[Russell:] Right, the dirty little kid.

[Participant:] Right, right, right.

[Russell:] And there are messy situations that we need to engage in.

[Participant:] I just got a lot of love for this dirty little —

[Russell:] Love that. Love that. Good.

[Participant:] Now, is that an example of what you're talking about? The question?

[Russell:] I'm not — it's certainly related. I'm not sure if it's a one-to-one correspondence, but it's in there, that sense of that larger perspective, and that warm-heartedness coming forward. Yeah, absolutely.

[Participant:] What about the narrow band that you talked about? There I got stuck. Is the narrow band stuckness?

[Russell:] That's my experience of how stuckness feels. And in my experience, what I need to do is relate to how that stuckness feels in my body, in my imagery, in my thoughts, and bring my care and curiosity to it, and let it know it's not alone.

[Participant:] And is that somehow relating to the I?

[Russell:] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

[Participant:] I think this is an example of more rootedness and objectivity. Yeah. I experienced relating to my older daughter for many, many years. And recently, I believe there's more warm-heartedness coming from me, which has allowed her to feel cared about and not judged. So she is sharing more with me, and sharing the oppressiveness of her life, that I am just acknowledging, or in my presence.

And it's interesting, because the objectivity is coming right now in how I hear her. And in addition to the oppressiveness, I hear in the story some resource. Although she's saying it, but she's sort of discounting it. And I've gotten so I'm like, oh, yeah, in my own head, that's a difference. But I also realize that I don't think she's asking for me to notice that.

So, but the objectivity is actually giving me a little hope. Where so many years she's felt life is oppressive — wow, there are seeds of resourcefulness in the life. But I think it's because I'm listening with more heartedness, instead of a mixture of that and judgment.

[Russell:] Right.

[Participant:] I can more objectively listen.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant:] And so that's been a gift for me. It's not a gift for her.

[Russell:] Yeah, I guess it is, in a way.

[Participant:] Oh, yeah.

[Russell:] Oh, yeah.

[Participant:] I will — that hopefulness will probably lead to more and more heartedness.

[Russell:] Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

[Participant:] If it's there or not there. Yeah. In terms of how we listen.

[Russell:] Yeah, yeah, yeah. Beautiful. Yeah.

I am with you, always

So, close your eyes for a moment. We'll take a pause in a little bit, but close your eyes for a moment.

And let yourself feel, I'm sitting here. Sense, or lying here, on this spot.

Let the thoughts and other things — you can notice them. Let them move in the background as you feel, I'm right here.

Feel my breath, this breath. This particular breath again.

And go into your inner body, inside yourself. And notice if you can access the quality of unconditional caring, warmheartedness, from yesterday. Let the image come. Key words. And you're inviting your body, not trying to force it.

Just let yourself immerse in that image, those words. If you had a gesture and you want that, you can use that.

And notice, from this — the image might need to change, maybe change significantly, but from this feeling state — notice how could a quality like objectivity, of just seeing what is, with the warmth, but without needing to change anything, needing to fix anything, without any of that.

See if something needs to come in, either to this image, or letting the image form, letting the bodily sense form. How can you be connected to this warm-hearted, and yet it's like you are — you don't feel like you can control their life, or fix their life, or make it better even. You can shine your light, and your caring, and your warmth.

If you like that image of a guardian angel, it's like you're from that perspective. Absolute caring, without interfering. Offering your light, for the situation to be seen more clearly.

Let the body warm, the sense. It might be historical beings for you, even in literature. You might not actually know them, who embody some of that. But invite your body to show you. Unconditionally warm. Yes, fully objective. Not a coochie-coochie-coo kind of warmth. More has that quality of standing next to, or above. Shining light toward.

Notice if the phrase, I am with you, always, fits for that. There's a quality in us that is here forever, committed to us, part of our consciousness. It's committed, it's warm, and it sees.

I am with you, always.

Turn the light towards the one sitting there, the one you often call I. Now you're saying, like the ocean looking back on the shore, I am with you, always.

Radiant warmth, clear light. I am with you, always.

[Silence 32 seconds]

Keep your eyes open, but stay connected to this quality. Like you are — you can feel this, like you are in it and with it. You are. It is coming towards the one sitting there, and it's within the one sitting there.

Radiant warmth, with clarity. The light is clarity. Radiant warmth, with clarity.

I am with you, always.

If there's a body sense of that, let yourself know that. If there's an image that accompanies that, its qualities of radiant warmth and clarity, clear seeing.

If there's a gesture that wants to help you know radiant, warm, and clear seeing.

[Silence 43 seconds]

Let your attention come back. Feeling you're sitting on this spot. You hear the sounds around you. You're right here.

Eyes open. Fill out a larger space.

Never alone

I deeply wish us all hearted clarity.

Those qualities of presence, of witnessing presence, live in us, through us. And the sense that comes, that I can speak to, is: one is never alone in their suffering. One's never alone in their suffering, when this quality has enough root and enough development.

And these words, from presence language, are such a gift for the with something in here, sensing a place. It's a means, a linguistic means, for the warm-hearted clarity.

Yes, the languaging of what we call presence language. Of, I am. I am with something. And we often say, oh, there's something here that feels tight or stuck. I am with this something. Some will also say, oh, there's a place in here, or there's a part of me. That you are always from this larger I.

And there's always a backward step if something feels stuck. You go from the Earth to the solar system, from the solar system to the galaxy, from the galaxy to the universe, from the universe to the multiverse. There's always a larger place in which the something can be. And when it has

space — like life, when it has space and light, it can be nourished. It can find its own unfolding. It can find its own next.

Our world is this cultivation of capacity. We will forget, and we will remember. We will forget, we will remember.

I am not I. I am the one walking beside me, who I do not see, who at times I manage to remember. Other times. Who is calm and silent, and forgives gently, walks. It's always here. It goes away. And it will remain standing.

Yeah, I've got copies of that for everybody. In Spanish and English. Juan Ramón Jiménez.

Okay, so this. Growing this resource, which we want — that unconditionality we had yesterday. Now we're adding this. Perfect that it's Father's Day, adding this masculine quality. Letting them be together in us. What a gift.

Anything that arises, whether this thing arises in the form of another person, or in the form of this person.

Thank you so much. Let's take a break.