Discussion

Angela 2 — Week 2, Day 5, Session 6 — 39 minutes

Summary: After a short sensing of fullness on the exhale, people share about space, permeable boundaries, and breath. Russell names a few practices to continue, organizes the drive to Goat Rock Beach, and reviews companioning in focusing — presencing, reflecting, reminding, and guiding.

Sensing and sharing

[Russell:] So just sense you sitting here. Just give it a moment, maybe with a very subtle fullness with the exhale downward.

And let your eyes be open, and sense you can have that subtle fullness downward.

There, eyes be open. Good. Must bring the attention out a little more.

[Participant:] Sure. Well, there's a variety, so I'll let you know what it's like now.

I feel a dropping, some movement towards the earth. And I have the comparison — I'm doing this often — that often I feel like endless space. I'm realizing that at this moment I don't. There's something inside that's getting ready to speak, and it's not allowing a kind of complete empty.

Saying that, I get curious. It's quite interesting. It has a boundary upon it that's not there when I do it in most circumstances. Doesn't want me to drop too far.

There's still an opening, but it's like it comes to the floor, comes to the ground, not through the ground and into space. There's a sense of letting go to a point.

It's good as fuck right now.

[Participant:] Just wanted to say that, just now. Listening to you and your experience just expanded my experience, from breathing down in my body and exhaling up in my body, and down infinitely into the earth, and up.

It just took me from a space of breathing only from within, to really letting this pause go in and out fully, of my whole experience.

[Russell:] Very happy to hear that. As we will focus on in our next week together — the physical body is too small for the living human being. It feels like a tight shoe after a while.

And so we need to learn what it's like to live through this body, but not feel so confined, because it is too small. It's not that there's something wrong with us. It's like our capacities extend into space. We are connected to infinite space, outside and inside. Breath can help us actually experience that, as you just did.

[Participant:] I think of an issue I've often struggled with, this issue of boundaries. You know, there's a lot of talk in psychological circles about having clear boundaries and firm boundaries, when our

boundaries are inherently permeable. And I've been really trying to get a handle on another way of understanding boundary that takes that permeability into consideration, at the same time that it takes this other aspect, and I haven't been able to.

[Russell:] Oh, Barbara, it's such an important subject, and that's again themes for week three, week four — space and boundary. Inner, outer, that's the dominant theme. So I'm not going to say much on this, and I'm just going to hear.

[Participant:] I've also been fascinated with this subject. What is this — on the one side, this experience of great interconnectedness, and yet this seeming necessity to have a boundary, something that helps my substantiality to know its location, and the great range of that.

[Russell:] Yeah, we really need help with that altogether. How to live as permeable beings without getting totally wiped out by all that's coming at us, and in us, and around us, and yet how not to create these walls that are so unsatisfying. Boy, these are important for us. So we will dwell in that in January.

[Participant:] So I want to leave here with an understanding of the breathing practices. We've been breathing ourselves a lot through this. It seems like some of the practices have us breathing down, exhaling out, and some of the practices have us — wait, breathing up, exhaling — or some of it is our natural breathing, and I'm not sure I see the thread right now.

Are we just learning different practices so that over time our body will self-select, or so that we will know which practice to draw on based on the situation? I just don't know the thread that I'm working.

Practices to continue

[Russell:] Okay, so you've identified a couple of them. One is to bring diversity to the system, diversity of experience, so your nervous system has more possibility of breathing in different places, breathing in different ways. First thing.

Second, in a more conscious way, that you can learn to sense where you are in your breath. I'm hoping that begins to be both a conscious curiosity — that you notice it more — and that it kind of just comes into your awareness. Oh, I'm holding. How am I — not just I'm — how is it now? Where am I? That it become part of your embodied living, a curiosity. So that's another part.

In terms of practice, I'm going to suggest — I'm hoping that you'll use the materials, because these are precious opportunities to keep you in the practice and in the study.

The four-part breathing, just having conscious pauses sometimes during your day. I would recommend that as practice.

The filling downward with an exhale, I would recommend that as a practice. Gentle filling — less than half of what you could do if you were doing it as much as you could. So that it's a filling and not a tensing. Just like there's a pausing and not a holding, there's a filling, not a tensing. So that's the second.

The third practice I'll recommend, just occasionally to play with, is get freer in this action, this chest-belly alternating action. If you've got the movement pretty much, then begin to find out, could you breathe and do the movements and not have it get tense anywhere, just that it's kind

of completely independent. That you could just keep doing it and you could be having a conversation. That gets just nothing. So playing with it over time is a helpful way for that.

We're going to do one more lesson tomorrow that will speak to that also. Okay?

[Participant:] I'd like to —

[Russell:] Okay, so — oh, we need a logistical thing.

Out to the beach

[Russell:] I'm assuming you guys are going to drive with Mesa and Liz, right? Anybody? Okay, work it out.

I'm picturing four people in a car, and seven cars besides you guys, because that will be twenty-eight without you two, because Shari and I are here. Are you coming this afternoon?

[Participant:] Okay.

[Russell:] Right, thank you. So probably still six or seven cars. Let's see. Do we have drivers who could take three people?

[Participant:] Pete, Nettie.

[Russell:] Okay, well, let's see. Pete, Nettie. You promise? Pete, Nettie, Robert, Linda. Pete, Nettie, Robert, Linda, Valerie. You don't sound like you want to drive.

[Participant:] Lori.

[Russell:] Are you happy to drive?

[Participant:] Okay.

[Russell:] I want people who are happy to drive. Shannon, you've got your group. Okay, so let's see. I don't think we need more.

Three people to go with Pete. Just self-select. Just raise your hand. Shari, Todd, Barbara, going with Pete.

Three people to go with Robbie.

[Participant:] Ruth, yeah. Uno, Felicity, Wendy.

[Russell:] You've got your three already. Excuse me, three people to go with Nettie. Who is that? Okay, you've got yours.

Three people to go with Lori. One, two, three. Three people can go with our last driver. I think we can make two more. Three people can go with Linda. So we've got Karen, we've got Sana, and who does that leave that doesn't have — so nobody. Has everybody got a car right now?

Okay, so now, who can take one more person in their car? We've got Pete. Does anybody else have enough room for one more person?

[Participant:] I have a car.

[Russell:] No, it's okay. It's okay. We've got it. Yeah? Okay. So, Lori.

[Participant:] Okay. So, Lori, I'll go in your car.

[Russell:] Well, but I'd like everybody to know, it's really simple.

When you go out of Angela Drive — you come out Angela — there's a road, make a right. It's called Old Redwood Highway. Make a right.

[Participant:] Goat Rock Beach.

[Russell:] You make a right onto Old Redwood Highway. You go down. You're going to come to — it's the first light? Second light. Second light, the first big street. And on this side it's called Mark West. It's called Mark West Road. You make a left onto Mark West.

You just go straight on it. It will change names. It will become River Road. Well, there is a point where you need to go right a little bit near Guerneville. It vees a little bit. So just know that you're continuing on. It could be called 116 West there, or it could have a sign that says toward Jenner. Know you're going toward Jenner. You're taking 116 West, or you're just staying on River Road. Any of those will get you there. I don't know what the sign actually says.

[Participant:] Right. Yeah.

[Russell:] Now, you're going to come to a sign that says Route One. You're going Route One south. There's a banner to the north. You're not going north. You're going south about a mile, and on your right will be Goat Rock Beach. The sign occurs, and then it's a right-hand turn into the state park.

[Participant:] Or, south — you're going to cross the Russian River on a nice bridge. You can't miss it, it's a landmark. The river at that point is almost all lake. So just make sure you turn left there. That's really the only turn. It's on Route One.

[Russell:] Yeah. And then when you get to Goat Rock, you'll see the sign, Goat Rock Beach. Make a right, and you go down a couple of places to park. Go all the way down, and we'll all park down there and go out on the beach from there.

[Participant:] Is it a seven-dollar fee for parking? There's supposed to be no charge?

[Russell:] Yeah, I was out there. There's no charge. They're talking about making one. I looked it up and I couldn't get quite an answer on that, but I'm pretty sure there'll be no charge.

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] No, we're going to the bottom parking lot. And so when you look at the water, Goat Rock will be off to the left. We're going straight.

Okay, so what I'd like — I've had some requests for a slightly different timing. I'd like to be in the cars at 1:45. So that means get down there by 1:40.

[Participant:] Huh?

[Russell:] That's a forty-minute drive. 1:45. And so we'll get there about 2:30, and we will leave the beach at about 4:30, being in the cars by a quarter of. So we're back by 5:30. It's about two hours at the beach.

Have a hat. It's pretty sunny. It's supposed to be about eighty out. There'll be some wind. It's not too much, about six miles an hour today, four to six, they said. But know you want layers, because it changes out there. It's unpredictable. It's a rather exceptional beach.

Don't have your back to the water if you're close to it, because there are sleeper waves. It's actually caught some people, so you don't want to be unconscious when you're near the water.

There are often nesting sea lions off to the side. They're really kind of wonderful, but don't get too close. They get disturbed if you get too close.

And there are some beautiful places to walk there.

The one thing I'm going to ask you to do — actually there are two things. One is, with your partner, the partner that you had before, you're going to have a listening time. Talking, listening, focusing kind of time. You have a choice of doing both at the beach. It'll be a twenty-minute period each. Doing both at the beach, doing one here between 1 and 1:30 and one at the beach, or doing one or both after you get back between 6 and 7.

So decide with your partner. Do you want to do one here, one there, both there? That's your choice.

Donna's partner — who's Donna's partner?

[Participant:] Donna's partner will be with Shari.

[Russell:] I'm taking her home. I'm going to rejoin tonight.

[Participant:] No, there was a cabaret.

[Russell:] Yeah, okay. So you can do it at home.

I'm depending on the space that's there. I'm hoping that we can —

[Participant:] You didn't reserve the beach?

[Russell:] I didn't reserve the beach.

So what I do want to do is leave at approximately the same time, get there at approximately the same time, so we can gather. We'll walk up to the beach, and we'll see. I don't know how much you can walk to the beach. We'll have to see if it's too much on your leg.

[Participant:] You think it's okay?

[Russell:] So what I'd like to do —

[Participant:] Oh, no problem. Yeah, I think it would be no problem.

[Participant:] It's hard to stop. You can carry me.

[Russell:] That's good.

So we'll all gather when we start. It is a practice I'd like to do together.

[Participant:] So, when is the time we're leaving?

[Russell:] 1:45. We're leaving the beach at 4:30, so that you're in the car by a quarter of.

[Participant:] Oh, okay.

[Participant:] Sorry, Russell. If we start doing both — and I have to consult my partner — both sessions at the beach, there's time for that?

[Russell:] Yeah, there's plenty of time. The practice I'm going to guide us through is fifteen minutes, so you'll have plenty of time just to be interacting and enjoying the natural world out there.

[Participant:] You'll take the practice at the beach?

[Russell:] No, but I'll tell you what it is.

[Participant:] So the practice — you're going to — Mom's going to take us through that at the beach. So we can't do it before.

[Russell:] Yeah, those that want to do it here — no, no, no, that's another practice. That's separate.

[Participant:] What is that?

[Russell:] Okay, can I continue?

[Participant:] Correct.

[Russell:] Same partner from this morning.

[Participant:] What should I wear?

[Russell:] You got your pants?

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] I want to say, at the first Angela group, there was an energetic outdoorsy woman who said, I want to go swimming. She went in the water, and I thought it was fine, but the ranger got really upset, saying there are riptides out here, you're putting yourself in danger, be careful, you shouldn't be running around like that, and you shouldn't be so close to the — they get concerned. They've lost people out there.

So if you're going to go in, you know, get your feet wet.

Companioning

[Russell:] Okay, so I want to — you see how it's going to go. You know, this has shifted energy since yesterday afternoon.

Okay, I would like to go over a few things briefly, and then we're going to eat lunch.

The picture that we're bringing about embodied listening, about focusing, is that it's ultimately always you with yourself. You with yourself, and the partner is a support for your capacity to be with yourself in a fresh way.

And it's this amazing picture that Gene Gendlin brings more clearly, for me, than anybody I've ever encountered. When we give our inner life a certain kind of welcoming, a certain kind of presence, it already knows what's needed in whatever situation you're exploring. It already knows at least — not necessarily the whole thing — but it knows a next step in that situation. That it's already in there, implicitly aligned. It just needs a certain kind of setting to come forward.

This is kind of the infrastructure of intuition, in a certain way. It's creating a setting for the next knowing, and we're practicing that kind of listening.

So I really emphasize this time, even more than last time — it was there last time — placing less of a focus on the components, and more on the one in there. The partner's presence is there for your

presence. And we will, as we go along, learn more skills with that. But for now, I want the partner emphasizing your presence, which you will do differently this time than the first time. What you started to do yesterday was reflecting back.

And I just wanted to give you a picture of ways of companioning, so you kind of have the overall picture that I'm carrying of it. Each step includes the previous step. So this is what I call how to be with something, in ourselves or with someone else.

The first practice as a companion — being with yourself also — is this step of presencing. This step of the I and the it, the being with.

As much as we can, recalling the presence language. I'm noticing something. I'm sensing something. There's something in here. There's a part of me. There's a place in here. There's something — that there's an I that's larger than anything that's there.

Then the second step in companioning is reflecting. That's where it's their words. You're not making anything up. It's whatever came from them. You're giving that back. So now we're starting to do this with the dyad, right?

The third step, that we're just going to do a very small piece of — I'll describe it in a moment — I got this word from Ann Cornell, is reminding. It's where the companion's job is to remind the focuser about what they already know about focusing, but they're forgetting because they're in something, right?

And the first main function of the companion is presencing. This is true when you're companioning yourself with an issue, too — to be present with it. Reflecting the words back to yourself is a great thing. That's why I recommend that self-focusers focus out loud, to hear your own words. If that can feel not upsetting, not embarrassing, if you have the space around you, many people are able to stay much more in touch when they hear their own words. More of their brain is connected when it's out loud.

You may find that doesn't work, but if it does, it's a really good hint when you're with yourself. And I'll even say something like, oh, is it? Oh, this really — it's a really tight place. And then I'll say, is it tight, or just right? So I'll actually reflect the word back to myself as a way of investigating. So it really does feel like there's something with something.

So there's reminding, and we'll be learning a bunch of reminders. You already have some of them, and I'm going to, in a moment, tell you the one reminder that's legal for today.

And then the fourth step of being with, or companioning, being a partner for — that we're not doing today — is guiding. When you're reflecting, all the words come from the other person. The only thing you're adding is some sentence structure. So for example, they might say, oh, it's really sad. And then you might say back, you're noticing something that's really sad in there. So you bring presence language into your reflecting.

Like we saw with Andy the first day, if you just give the word, it tends to amplify the feeling.

Okay, so for now — and later we can look at other exceptions — but for now, we want you to get this picture.

First, presencing is the ground of the work. If you don't say a word, that can be a beautiful way of being with something.

Second is reflecting. It's all coming from your partner. It's their words.

The third is reminding. Here you're beginning to initiate some things, but it's really growing out of whatever they have said.

And the fourth, that we'll get into much more next time, is guiding. Here you're following some — if they're open to it, if they want that, if they ask you to do all of these, then you would be offering a little bit more.

But what I really want to somehow get home — I don't think I've done a good enough job of it over the years — is the sense that it's not about the other person. They're there because your wisdom body can speak in certain environments. I want to do more to encourage you to sense that.

[Participant:] I'm struggling with reflecting being only words. I'm wondering about reflecting the things I'm not aware of, that could be a gesture, that could be a voice tone, that the person may not make as present as the words.

[Russell:] That's right. Gestural reflection is great, wonderful, absolutely.

[Participant:] Yeah. Well, along that line, when the person has their eyes closed, you can say, I see you're smiling, or your hands are doing something, so you can reflect that. You can reflect the gesture.

[Russell:] Yeah. Yes.

Now, I'm just going to take a moment. I'm encouraging you to write these down, if this is not real fresh for you, to have these with you, and I'll tell you why in a moment. These are examples of reminders.

The companion today is not doing these. I'm giving these for the person going inside, for the focuser. There's only one of these that's legal today for the companion, and that is pause.

You can say something like, maybe you'd like to pause there for a moment. Or, maybe pause. That feels okay. When the word pausing is used, the whole idea is that the whole sentence would be — you don't have to say this, but the whole sentence would be — sensing how all that is in there, or how that is in the body right now. I'm hoping you give this direction to yourself.

These are reminders, meaning these are what I'm hoping the person listening to themselves, called the focuser, is saying to themselves sometimes. When you are in harmony, when you kind of learn the basics of this way of self-listening, many of these become just very natural things to say to yourself when you're in process.

Later, your companion will remind you of some of these things if you forget them. For now, I would love you to — and these are certainly not the only ones, these are just some of the ones I think are most important, and you'll find other ones that you like better later in your own process. But what I'd like for this interaction is that these are in the dyad. At least one of you has written them out.

And the person going inside, if you're feeling stuck anywhere, you can actually look at this and see, is there something I could say to myself? Like, oh, let me go back to sensing that in my body. Or you can use these as reminders.

I also want to encourage that when you're reflecting on the session together, you just look. Did the person kind of forget to pause? When you're looking at your own session — oh, you know, I stopped sensing my bodily sense very much. Or, oh, I didn't really check what that place feels like from its point of view. I was always outside of it. I didn't ask it what it wanted and needed. And then, of course, this big one down here — have you forgotten presence language.

And so together you can look back, and — oh, right, I was identified with the part that kept wanting to fix things. I kept calling that I. That's good for me to remember. You get what I mean? So these become reflections later for your inquiry together.

[Participant:] Please. I just — teaching this over a little while, and also learning it, I've really seen how challenging it is to be a companion. And so I just want to mention, the reason only certain of these are legal now, rather than all of these, is to give you the freedom to just get really comfortable being in presence and listening.

If you were also trying to remember all those things, it's hard to be present for someone, and your presence for them is so valuable. So that as you get more and more comfortable as a focuser with these things, then later on, if as a companion you want to mention them, they're just there intuitively. You're not lost in your thinking, that takes you away from being in presence.

[Russell:] That's great. That's great.

And I just want to add, at this point too, as a companion, less is more.

[Participant:] Yeah. It's great.

[Russell:] Your presence is surprisingly powerful. Even if the person is, quote, breaking all the rules. Your presence, if they're spending time in a listening way, and even a little bit coming back to their body, even a little bit interrupting their identification with a certain voice — that's a lot.

And then you'll be able to reflect together, and it'll be great, because you'll learn something hot off the press. Oh, I did that. Oh, I want to look at that next time.

We're going to end this discussion, because Therese is waiting for us, and she likes —

[Participant:] What is the subject of this focusing?

[Russell:] The subject of your focus — you would like to know that. I would like you to look for any situation in your life that you would like more information about, that you would like more clarity about, that you'd like some direction with. And I recommend it be a twenty-minute period. And also, the speaker doesn't have to vocalize all that's coming up.

[Participant:] Right, that's right. Really important that the speaker doesn't say anything that doesn't want to be said.

[Participant:] In line with that — as you say, and as I know — you can follow somebody's focusing without knowing all the details. But it can happen that you don't understand what the focuser is saying, or that you're confused, and that you're lost.

And in my experience, there's nothing that reduces one's ability to be present more than that feeling of, I have no idea what they're talking about. And then you just leave.

So it's really okay, as I understand, to say, wait a minute, I don't understand that, I didn't catch that. Because to be present, you need to be following something. It doesn't have to be the details, but it could be following. That's what you're talking about.

[Russell:] Yeah. If you feel lost, if you're not even hearing them because they're talking too low, or they went into some language you couldn't quite catch — just what Barbara was saying. I'd really like to understand. I'm losing it a little bit. Could you say more? Could you bring me back to that? Just enough that you feel rapport and harmony. Because that gets better.

Great, thank you.