Discussion

Angela 2 — Week 3, Day 2, Session 3 — 74 minutes

Summary: Russell invites a sitting to sense ground, breath, and sound, then to notice what is growing, longed for, and wanted in this week. The group draws into a smaller circle and passes a ball, each person naming what is alive. He closes by asking for more space around the feeling body so it is not overwhelmed.

Sitting

[Russell:] So please sit comfortably, and I invite you to close your eyes, and connect with yourself on this spot, and your contact, the earth beneath you, and a sense of your feet. Wherever your hands are, feel the weight and contact of your hands, and sense the breath coming and going.

And include the sounds, so that you're also in a larger space, and the sounds can help you to connect beyond the physical body.

And then notice how you can kind of dance in that space of the ground, the sound, with the breath kind of connecting the inner and the outer. The breath has both. Pull air from the outer, exhale to the inner. We bring breath in from the outside, and then we let it out from the inside.

And so we can have this sense of, I'm here. I know myself on this spot, and I'm in this larger space.

Maybe there can be a feeling of support underneath you.

And just take a moment to reflect. You're standing back from your life, standing back from your journey. We imagine your life as a journey. We think of a path, a path of coming awake to yourself, coming awake to living, awake to a greater capacity for love and connectedness. However you frame that for yourself.

It's kind of taking a step back and noticing, where am I? How am I? What am I working with currently, if this life is a great classroom? What are some of my current subjects?

And just see how it comes. Just kind of a very open invitation to your inner life.

You might like to have images of yourself at work, at home, in different places, and in different interactions, and inviting what is coming.

What are you appreciating that has been growing in you?

Really take some moments to appreciate some of the qualities that are alive in you, that you're grateful for, even if they're incomplete or in process, unfolding, and acknowledging also where the longing is, where the pull or direction — next, or edge. Just a sense of that.

And really be open with your inner life. There's nothing that you'll need to say to anyone else if it's a quiet, shy, personal place that doesn't want to — but it can be acknowledged by you, for you.

Just giving that open invitation to your inner life.

Include, as you're reflecting, some of what you're hoping will happen during this week, some of what you're wanting, and there may be some things that you're not wanting. And let there be space for that, some of the wanting and not wanting. You just kind of invite that, and you see if something comes.

[Silence 40 seconds]

I just want to take another couple of minutes. Another way to approach it that might be helpful is, what feels like it's nourishing for my inner life right now? What's it hungry for?

That can be something that would be comfortable, or not so comfortable, but it's got a kind of pull toward it.

[Silence 45 seconds]

Let that go for now, letting your inner life know you're available. Other things want to come? You just reconnect to your sitting here, the sense of a ground, and the sound, and the breath.

[Silence 49 seconds]

A smaller circle

[Russell:] Your eyes open. Open into the larger space.

And I'd like to keep a sense of circle, but much smaller. So let's come in so that we're closer toward each other, but still so that we can see each other. And it's fine to be in chairs, or —

[Silence 41 seconds]

So I'm wanting to take a little time this morning, or as much time as is needed, to bring each voice in the room, to offer together what feels right to say about kind of what we're working with. If there is a clear something that is coming for you, it's helpful to verbalize it if that feels right. It's helpful to keep it in if that feels right, but to know it in yourself.

Our brains work so well with some clarity of direction. It's a homeostatic kind of device. When it has a direction, it can find balance in that direction much more easily than when it's amorphous. Systems are like that. Direction is very helpful.

And if there's some sense of wanting and not wanting during our time together, that's welcome.

And I want to do it in a slightly different way than maybe we often do. I'll start. I'm going to say some things. If you don't feel like saying anything, you can just give a little bow.

And I think — this may not be necessary, but just in case — I want us all to give our names again. I don't want anybody to feel uncomfortable, like I can't remember. So let's just make sure.

So we'll give our names, and if there's something, I recommend giving your name and pausing. And waiting — five, ten seconds, whatever — to see what feels right to come forward. You don't necessarily know ahead of time. It might be what you've already thought. It might come fresh in another way.

And it's relatively short. A minute, two minutes, three minutes, not more than five probably for any given person, unless it's needed.

And then what I want to do is, I've got my friend here. It's a ball, a cosmic ball. It's got planets on it. Because one of the images that I love is that we are each the center of a universe. We're each the center of a universe. Talk about a central sun. Each a sun in a universe.

And everyone in the room — for my universe, you are all very important stars and planets in the universe in which I'm a central sun. And I get to be a star or planet in your universe, the one that you're the central sun of.

And it's so wonderful when we have the picture that everyone came here to be part of my universe, for my unfolding, for my next. Everyone is here. Everyone showed up. Everyone was invited to come to my party, that I'm the central sun of.

And I hope you can have that, and you can also have that you came to be a player in everyone else's universe. You came to be a planet or a star in each other person's world that they're living in, and you are a piece of their world.

And my deep hope is that you can have both of those, and you're not wedded to only one side of that — to being a minor planet in everyone else's world but you don't have a world, or it has to be your world.

So I love that picture, and this reminds me of that. So the way I'd like to do this is, you share something, and when you feel finished, you bow, and then you look around, and you look for a gesture from anybody. An eye movement, not a word, but a gesture. It can go like this, that they're ready for the ball. And then you're going to get the ball to them.

But the way you're going to get the ball to them is any way possible. You could walk it over to them. You could make good contact and throw it to them. You could ask them to stand up. You could throw it. You could roll it. You could bounce it. But the thing is, if they don't get the ball, you get to do it again. Whereas if it goes to somebody else — okay, so you have contact with somebody, and you find a way, a playful way, whatever way, to get the ball to them. Okay?

So, we are here, but we're part of another being, and the space in between us is part of us too. And how we connect is part of what we're working with.

So I will start.

Sharing

[Russell:] I really don't know what I want to say. So, I'm Russell, and —

Yeah. Yeah. It's going to take a moment.

So, what comes for me is something about — it's got this kind of a movement. It's something about giving, receiving. Is it? Or something about finding the right amounts.

There's something that's been coming, especially in my meditation, of wanting to give that, and there's a place inside that's holding back a little bit, concerned about overwhelming — something like that. Overwhelming people, confusing people, trying to bring language to challenging places.

There's something about that, and there's also — I don't know if this is the same thing or right next to it, but it's a similar energy. I ended last year feeling really tired, and it was so good to get three weeks of not teaching. And some of that just felt like — and some of it felt like I got a little

burnt out by the end of the year. And I'm wondering about that. I'm wondering, well, is that just a product of my schedule, my life, or is there a way that I am interacting? Is there some way in which I'm working harder than I need to?

So I'm not sure about that, but that's up for me as a question.

Yeah, and it's not only in teaching. It's also in — yeah, how much. Something about how much is really up. I'm not exactly sure of the rest of it, but that's clear. And it's about in and out.

And there's something about the giving and holding back, and there's something inside that really doesn't like the expression "holding back." It doesn't feel good, but that's in there somewhere, and I'm not sure what to do with that yet.

And I don't want to take the whole time to work on that, but I realize that that's something up for me. I need another minute with it. There's something about holding back that doesn't feel right. It feels stingy, or feels held. And there's something about holding back that is discretion, and feels right. And so there are some distinctions about that that are not yet clear.

Yeah, and I can flash through my life with my wife, my daughter, my teaching, and that issue is around somehow. So that's interesting. I have not verbalized that.

Thank you for listening.

[Participant 1:] Oh, I'm Tom. I'm just noticing my heart beating very fast.

And I'm sitting with a few things in this moment. One of the things that I am sitting with, and came into this week with, was beyond excited. It was almost an elation of coming here, being in the work and being with everyone here.

And then something that's sort of connected to that was, somehow or another I missed the email. Found out last night at dinner that Andy was no longer with us. And so, yeah, sadness is present.

For all that aren't — I have to admit there's something Andy-ness special.

And I even had a dream, a very visual dream last night. The new group feels almost like a new group. And it's great, and I'm still very much excited, and it feels that way for me.

And just a little emotional about this. Some silly little dumb theory stuff going on.

Had the dream last night. It has Oksana holding a jumbo playing card. It was a king. And on the bottom of the king, the jumbo playing card, the bottom half was all black with two sets of eyes, and it said "thief in the night." And the feeling that I got with that was just the complete shock that I experienced last night at dinner, when I found out that Andy had also —

And I think just the last thing that I'd want to presence here today is also this feeling of really knowing how to be authentic, being around people that I love so much, and that I love exploring with, myself in this world. And knowing that I see you twice a year. So I don't want to just, with each person at breakfast and lunch and dinner, this is what's going on, this is what's going on, this is what's going on.

So there's that also, the sense of learning and asking myself, how do I want to really be in authentic relation with everyone here?

That feels good. That feels good, yes.

Thank you, everyone. That feels good.

[Participant 2:] Sorry.

There's something about the massiveness, the change that is happening in my life, that is really exciting, but is also an unknown, sort of an unsure place to be. Unfamiliar.

And I just want to put the words to that. There's kind of a tentativeness within me about opening up and being completely here. Not really completely here, but I just have a sort of feeling of wanting to step out and be more connected and more open, and there's a sense of everything spilling out.

A feeling like that's an old behavior, and I wanted to put some sort of strain in there to keep it from just free-flowing. And I feel that's a healthy direction to go into, but I'm unfamiliar, so I'm not really sure how to go about doing that. And so in my unsurety, just kind of feeling like I'm sort of holding back. I'm feeling a little unsure.

That being said, this morning I was talking about the space being vulnerable. Really wanting to say this, but not saying it. I didn't experience that at all. What I felt — space was more like what you said. That's really safe. And that there's incredible amounts of wisdom in it, in communication and connection and information.

And really just knowing that I've had a sort of sense of that, but not being aware of it until today. Really finding it fascinating, and looking so forward to experiencing more, and just getting a little bit more connection with what's already developing in that sense.

So I guess I must kind of hold on to what it feels like, and try to really be open and soft about it, rather than tense and sort of moving back.

[Silence 32 seconds]

[Participant 3:] It's wonderful listening, and just really responding to everything so far. I was very excited about coming. Finally — maybe I didn't really know why. I just wanted to be here. And I think a lot of what Russell said this morning is informing that.

I'm an earth sign. In fact, my birthday is coming up in a couple of days, and I'm really excited about expanding into something beyond that grounded earth thing that's trudged me through life so far.

So I can't imagine better people to be with to do that, and I feel so fortunate. I feel home, and I feel surprisingly safe. Foolishly, but there I am.

And my brain registered something I wanted to share, which is just — my college, a million years ago, a small women's college in Virginia. Our motto was "Vida Abundantior," which is life more abundant. Which I say because I just felt it so strongly when we were doing this exercise this morning. And it's the first time I can say that without embarrassment.

Life more abundant. In the Latin.

[Russell:] Maybe later you can write it up there.

[Participant 3:] I won't ruin that one.

[Russell:] Robert.

[Participant 4:] The last few days, maybe the last three days, have been really important. And somehow it's all having to do with my being such a solitary person, who lives alone and has for a long time, does his own work in journalism, with his own demons, and so on.

And over the last week, my neighbor, who we share a wall — he let his daughter bring this barky dog, and it's against the rule to have a dog there. And so I said, this is really intolerable, assuming that he would tell his daughter not to bring the dog. But the dog was there the next morning. And then I said, Dennis, this has got to stop, assuming he would tell his daughter. And the dog was there the next morning. It's happened three times. I think three or four times. And then they freaked out. They just lost it.

And I left him this angry message, and I called the landlady, and I told her, I got to be angry at somebody, so I didn't talk to you.

So I went through that day, and I imagined buying a condo. All the ways I could get away from this. None of this happened. And I called one friend, and I said, I don't understand, really, why I'm being persecuted by this dog. And she said, you're asking the right question.

So, granted, I incrementally got some insight into my own — what do you call it — conflict-avoidant nature. And how that felt generally throughout my life, and how I wasn't angry enough about things like guns, that I was kind of ceding authority to the NRA. And then I really started to get angry.

Then I talked to another friend later on in the evening, and the whole day became so comical. It became so funny, and I just assumed a sense of humor. The whole day was so funny.

And that night — so as I felt fairly more — and that night I woke up at about two or three, and I had a hard time sleeping. And then something happened, and this is impossible, hard to describe, but — oh, I remembered something that we had said here, like, notice something in the room. And I did, and I became present in the room, like that.

And then I looked outside my window, and it was kind of a cloudy night, but there was a star up there. And I felt this — like, this is not — but I felt that I had a relationship, or a connection, to that star. And it was as real as any, and I don't want to deny that, as if it were some kind of just fantasy, wishful.

So I woke up in the morning, not exhilarated, but with this feeling of a vastly new world, a new world that I was open to. And then I thought, the way I want to live my life is, I'm going to go to Europe and go to all of your workshops.

[Russell:] Yeah, come, come.

[Participant 4:] And so the idea of your workshops would coordinate with this sense of opening.

Yeah. So just that dog did that.

[Silence 58 seconds]

[Participant 5:] When I showed up yesterday evening, we had the usual collection of dishes in the area. That didn't work. There seems to be a large collection. Lately there's been a few new ones.

When I went home last night, about eight or nine o'clock, my wife was about three feet off the floor. My son was about six feet off the floor, and there were other family members who were having similar problems.

My wife took one look at me and said, you're changed. And the association with the work — I gotta say, I didn't really expect the contact when I came in here last night, the personal contact. I think that was probably the largest part for me. Settle down, put a small grin on my face, and look at things from a different perspective on the world. Different awareness, different associations.

Everybody in here is playing on the same side of the rope. You know, like where the rope's going to lead, pointing in the same direction, which is a tremendous amount of synergy for me.

I have to go back to most of the school, the rest of the topics, generally, but not fires. Having fun here and there, but for me the problems seem to be predominant some days. This helps me put it in perspective.

And beyond that, it leads my eyes towards the light out there, and to the origins of the new world, and truths, and the positive ones. So for that, I say thanks.

[Russell:] It's an anxiety that I'm catching. I need to raise my hands and resonate as something.

Start with Linda. Linda. And louder. Linda, louder.

[Participant 6:] This morning, just before my meditation, when you were talking about how when it gets too cold, and pretty soon it'll be this bright, and then it will be too hot. And there are a couple of little koans that I kind of played with, the Buddhists, and one was too hot, too cold. And I never really resonated with that until this morning, and I'm like, oh yeah. Yeah, 'cause there's that just-right spot in the middle, and that's important to keep there for me, because in my universe that I move around in, I kind of just realize how much I feel responsible for making it just right, or keeping it just right. Not only for myself, but for the surroundings.

And I've been kind of playing with that just internally lately, in a few different ways. Like, where's the responsibility here? How much am I being responsible for? And that, for me — and so even before I got here, that started to open little pockets of space.

And when we did our practice this morning, when we were putting our attention inside and then outside, looking down, and following it through with the walking around, there was something in that practice that put me very much in touch with this space around me, and the consciousness of that space, and of me in that space, and me somehow looking at me, and seeing this vastness, and also this small, worried, responsible person. And that was really, really powerful.

I think it's about the first time that I have — well, I see that sometimes. The things that we say we're trying to befriend in ourselves, and I see them, and I try to befriend it, but it's happening mostly out here. I'm trying to befriend it, but I'm not really befriending. And this was kind of like the first experience I had where I was so in touch with this more vast, that this was so easy to befriend, because it wasn't me. I guess it wasn't really that important.

And so it's interesting that what I've been playing with a little, in my mind and in my practice — it's like everything you've done so far has resonated with me.

[Russell:] Beautiful. Can hardly wait for day two. Thank you, Linda.

Nice.

Let's pause for a moment, 'cause I don't know your experience, but for me, really listening and receiving is very filling and fulfilling. And at this moment, I need just a little pause for some space. Be ready for the next.

Listening

[Russell:] And with that encouragement to each of us to keep practicing our whole body listening. And if you find yourself rehearsing what you're going to say, notice it, but come back. And feel if you can hear, from this larger space of you, the gift that's coming.

It's such a visceral sense for me right now that each offering is living in here somehow, and becomes food for my inner life in some unknown way.

Let's just stand for a moment, just so that we are really available for delicious dining.

[Silence 34 seconds]

Let's continue.

[Silence 41 seconds]

Continuing

[Participant 7:] Sharing. This is what feels difficult, and sharing is what I want to work on. It's this willing of space in the field and the people, versus some deep internal place.

So I'm very familiar with being really deep inside myself. I don't have a lot of earth in my chart. I wish I did. I have a lot of water and fire. And I think the sensitivity has, from an early age, really made me go deep into it.

And about twenty years ago, I decided I was going to start paying attention to my body, because I had realized somehow I wasn't in it.

And it's been this amazing journey. And really, like many people have said, coming here and being with people who are on the same quest of being in the body and living more abundantly — that's really what my intention is.

And somehow becoming present to that fear. Just this week, in my meditation group, our leader had asked me to lead the discussion group for half of our meditators, and I did it. And I think I did okay, but I was so aware of this part of me that just wanted to leave my body fully. I had to bring myself back. Bring this back.

And then I went home, focused on that place, and said, what was that? What is that that just wants to leave? And I just got this really deep — on the left side of my body, this place that was just like, I don't want to be seen, and I don't want to be responsible. And I was very clear. Don't want to be seen, and don't want to be responsible for these people, or for their wanting something from me.

So that was actually huge, that I had that breakthrough. And coming here this week, that is what I want — deepening my holding of that place in me, and with passion, and not so much judgment, because I've had a lot of judgment about it. Why is it so terrifying to be seen?

[Russell:] Thank you, Lisa.

[Participant 7:] Thank you.

[Russell:] Christina.

[Participant 8:] One of the things that I want to share, most recently in my singing practice, is that I want you all to know that I've happily included my diaphragm and my rib cage in my breathing. And it was actually something really big for me, that I didn't even realize it wasn't part of my existing.

And it's made a big difference in how I see myself, and how I stand, how I think, and a lot of it is how I take in life — like how I breathe in, and breathe in more of an expansive part of life.

And in knowing that, I feel completely different from last year. On many levels, it's really hard even for me to explain or put into words. It's this sense that I have a lot of what you've all touched on, about this unlimited resource, and this well that I pull from daily, that I listen to and really pay attention to, and move more from that place.

And at times I feel like I'm a kid. I play with things a lot, in the embodied language and the feeling, and I turn that light towards my own world, how I interpret it. And so I'm living in a totally different way, even more than I was before. So I feel like I'm experimenting, but the experiment is becoming me.

And I don't know, I'm just glowing and beaming. I feel really happy.

[Russell:] Glowing and beaming. Glowing and beaming.

[Participant 8:] It's touched a lot of different aspects of my life. And not a lot of you knew, last year, that it was pretty fiery for me. Two of my major jobs went away, and the details aren't really important. But the main thing is that I wrote something that I was looking at last night, and it said, from the last session, about being fearless is doing what feels right. And so I just lived from that, and I continue to live from that, and I continue to live from the listening, the feeling, the sensing, the intuitive place, in a very different paradigm.

And I'm self-employed. And my practice — I mean, I've always had a part-time practice, but I've just recently switched. And things are just rapidly moving, and I just feel, jeez, I don't even know what's going to come next, but it feels really, really, really great.

Like, part of me last year felt in prison, but it was only within myself. It wasn't the jobs. It was so much of this internal, lovely work that's been gifted to me from you, and all of you.

So, thank you.

[Participant 9:] I'm feeling weakness. Feeling my belly. That grieves my heart too. Sadness.

And I didn't expect this was what was going to come up.

I think what I'm experiencing is that often, when I come to my heart, it's sadness.

And I think this last year, for me, has been about, maybe for the first time, really connecting with me, and allowing myself to be with everything. The uncomfortable — mainly the uncomfortable — but on many levels.

Previously, I think I was always out here. And I would have moments, but I had to be alone to be able to connect with me. And even when those opportunities came, I would often do something to stop that.

And now, this last period of time, what I'm noticing is that I would like to be able to be — the words come to mind — in two places at once. And that's here, and here.

And often in the past, when I go here, there's no connection to here, and so it's like my voice is gone. It's like I'm gone.

And I'm ready for that to be different.

Thank you.

[Participant 10:] My name is Wendy.

I want to confess I was sort of planning about what I wanted to say, but as I'm starting to say it, I'm feeling a little bit anxious. Not about saying it, but about getting caught up in words and not getting clear.

I've been very aware of how the light is changing. Today is giving us a little more light. I just really appreciated how the light changed in our meditation this morning. I think internally I'm feeling lighter.

And the way I'm feeling lighter is being more compassionate toward myself. I'm kind of letting myself off the hook. I think I've had a very intense — much more intense. I created the intensity. It was a real worry about a granddaughter, but that intensity and worry was very unhelpful to the people I care about, and to myself, and caused a lot of suffering.

And so, in looking back, that's not new. It came as a clarity of a process. And so I really want to bring light into that place of too much caring, or when it gets twisted into worry or grief, and how to really love people.

And I guess I'm starting with me, finding that place of just acceptance. And so I'm starting with acceptance and non-judgment.

This is enough. I'm enough for me, and I'm enough for other people. I don't need to be more. And I think when I start being more, that's when —

So anyway, I didn't plan that. That all came out. Maybe I'll listen to the tape.

Space for feeling

[Russell:] Yeah. I guess. Yeah, we should pause. Let's pause, and let's stand. And we will continue later.

Good job, Karen.

Stand. Yeah.

It's a lot, no doubt, living. If you tune in — chest, your belly — how all of this resonates.

I suggest you create, intentionally, an infrastructure. That you have the sensations of your physical body, the ground, the feeling of I'm here on this spot, space around me, so that the feeling body has room.

And I'm clearer about this. My sense is that if we live in the feeling body without really clarifying the space around it, we get overwhelmed, and we either turn off or go into our history. That we need more infrastructure for what's living in here. Need more space for it.

And it's as simple as including the ground, the space around me, above me. Can at least include the space right around my body. Feel the breath.

And from all that, then we go, oh, how has this one been touched? I just want to give it that. As you feel that, you can hear the words.

I'm suggesting, when we go straight to the feeling body, the feeling body can collapse the physical body. When we grow the infrastructure and have the feelings within that, the feelings can fill out their space, and there's the capacity for the friend to notice, for that larger space to be with all of that. Yeah?

And it's such a key move. As we expand our capacity to be touched, we're also expanding the space in which that touching is occurring, or we're entering that larger space. It's not even expanding. It's just entering the space that's there.

And so feel yourself, all living in and around you.

Closing

[Russell:] We will hear from everybody, and I'm so excited.

Have a good lunch, a nice pause. Feel what you need. Do you need a walk? If it's a nap, what's needed?

Those meeting with me, it's the same room, the white room downstairs. And is it three or three-thirty?

[Participant 11:] Three, three.

[Russell:] I don't know. There was a schedule right there.