# Discussion

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Angela 2 — Week 3, Day 2, Session 4 — 86 minutes

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*Summary: The group stands and senses the ground, then explores how the nervous system clings to the negative. Throwing a ball, they practice giving and receiving with awareness of self, other, and space. Sitting in a circle, people share what is living: family and belonging, the longing to communicate truly, and the vulnerability of finding oneself.*

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## Standing here

*[Russell:]* Let's start standing.

Move the things back a little bit, and in a circle or oval or something like that. Move your mats back.

So, a big oval, and we begin sensing. Actually — I probably should. Yeah.

We begin sensing that you're here on this spot. This spot, always a spot. Not to gloss over.

This place, this particular moment of connection to the ground, and what rises out of that ground. Same in sitting, what rises out of the sitting.

Let the simplicity of the direct contact bring our attention to that which we normally skip over, that doesn't require our attention. But we make an act of will, or intentionality, toward being awake in this moment.

Left to its own devices, the nervous system will almost always be oriented, and only attend to that which is uncomfortable, dangerous, or undesirable. That's what you'll end up with. Filtered in by some moments of something being bright enough, or loud enough, to get through.

But left to its own devices, the nervous system's orientation is toward that which is uncomfortable, that which is dangerous, and that which we can generally call negative. Except in those moments where something is strong enough to come through.

The biological, historical orientation of the nervous system is first towards anything dangerous, anything that's uncomfortable, anything that's potentially uncomfortable. And so it takes an act of intention to orient towards, I'm standing here. It's not terrible, it's not wonderful, it's true. And I can bring attention there.

And just like we've done before, and we will continue to do, to bring our attention to what we're grateful for. How to coax out of our experience that which doesn't demand—

You look like you want to say something.

*[Participant 1:]* Well, I came in late. I just am a little confused what you're saying, and the nervous system's orientation.

*[Russell:]* Yeah, we're talking about sex. You see?

*[Participant 1:]* My point exactly. No.

*[Russell:]* What I'm saying is — yeah.

*[Participant 1:]* Yeah. Right. Right.

*[Russell:]* Okay, so let me say. Actually, Rick Hanson said it pretty nicely when he said we are Velcro for the dangerous, negative, challenging, difficult moments. We tend to be Velcro for that, and Teflon for the subtle positive things that occur.

And that's what I notice. And why would this be true?

You don't think that's true?

*[Participant 1:]* I don't agree.

*[Russell:]* I encourage you not to disagree.

I'm referring to, in addition to repetitive patterns we might be stuck on, that many people will not notice their body until something hurts. It's a non-factor, except in strong moments, like a sexual experience, or something being particularly something.

We will tend, most beings will tend, to have stronger recall for that which they didn't like than something that is attractive. That's what I notice. And we can look at the biology of that, but not right at this moment.

I'd say hold it as a question. If that doesn't seem accurate in your experience, hold it as a question.

Do you tend, at the end of the day, when you've had a number of interactions that have been pleasant, but one person gave you a — who do you think about before you go to bed? Do you think about all those smiles that you got, and all those kindnesses you received, or do you tend to go back to the place that hurt you, even if it was a mild hurt?

Where do you tend to go? Begin to observe.

And I would say that learning to cultivate our life-giving moments — these moments where we're being, in my language, blessed over and over — that actually watering the seeds of those moments is a very life-giving bodily habit to develop.

Yeah, so you see what you find.

## A gift through space

*[Russell:]* For right now, feel yourself standing, and we're going to experiment with bringing the ball to other people. Then we'll go back to sharing our experiences.

The point is that the person throwing the ball, it's like you're giving a gift. And you want to give it in a way that it can be received. So it's not in any sense like you're trying to challenge them. It's your interest.

We could say the predominant responsibility for the catch is on the thrower.

It's kind of what I do with my granddaughter when she's growing up. I needed her to catch, so I had to throw so she could catch it. You ready? Yeah.

And find somebody, and make sure they're ready. It can be somebody near you, or far.

Okay, so let's go back. Take it again, Sarah. Take the ball. Give Sarah the ball.

So, pause for a moment.

This is called the study of spatial awareness. And it is so good that we blow a number of things.

The point is, whether it's giving somebody a communication and receiving a communication, or giving a ball and receiving a ball, there's a person, there's a space — you're always in a space — and there's some way that you're connecting through space. And this is human interaction.

And if we get just in our own self, and not so connected to the person and the space, we often bump into things, right? If we lose our self and we're so focused on them, we might throw it in any old way.

So we need to cultivate the attention to self, other, and space.

And again, this is not about doing it right. It's about investigating. Can I have myself? Can I have the other? Can I not throw it till I get the message that they're ready? Can I even get a message that maybe they're a little scared because it's far, and move a little closer, even if they haven't said anything?

Could I try to somehow sense the readiness of this moment for this interaction? And which parts do I tend to miss? Get what I mean?

So we're just throwing the ball, but all that's in it.

*[Silence 3 minutes]*

*[Russell:]* Imagine that you're giving a gift, sending a gift to the other.

*[Silence 2 minutes]*

*[Russell:]* Let's go once again.

Let's do something. And walking. And the oriented version of it, because at a certain point the ball's going to be grounded.

Moreover, again, is the connection with the receiving. You never give your gift, you never hoist it upon somebody. And so you have an indicator that it's okay, a sense of readiness and interest. If you really don't want the ball, you don't give any interest.

And keep walking. Keep walking. We'll do our best actually to keep walking, even as we grow in. So it's an interesting question, trying to convey.

*[Silence 37 seconds]*

*[Russell:]* And we want to start gently.

And walk, and we'll find you, and we'll circle a little bit faster. But make sure you have both, in walking and then following. Make sure that there's a connection. Go backwards, sideways, but keep the circle moving.

You aware of the space, as much as you can?

So you've got the circle, you've got all the ground thing. Do you think they can do another?

Have connection to the person you're throwing to. Go backwards, forwards.

Pause. Pause for a moment. Pause standing.

Sense the beings around you. The ground, your height, and the space around you. How far you can sense your body into the space around you, where the others are. What's around you on the ground.

This moving of attention in and out, sensing self and world, is quite challenging. Most of us have a preference. We're inner more, or outer more, and many of us have a tendency to be in or out.

But this fluidity of actually discovering that the inner world and the outer world become one world, that there's a fluidity, and there's an inclusiveness that feels quite different.

Let's go the other direction. And again, you're tuning in.

And it's totally wonderful if you happen to bump into somebody, or lose them all. But what we're experimenting with is awareness of self, others, and space, as we're doing.

So let's move. You can be walking backwards, forwards, but if you're going backwards, extend attention into the space behind you.

Go ahead. Where are the people?

Do your best to open your attention to the person with the ball, while you're attending to the beings around you and the ground. This is attention.

You can even move the ball even more quickly, but attentively.

So if you can make contact, and be available to the person, orient attention to the person with the ball. There can be many possibilities.

*[Silence 32 seconds]*

*[Russell:]* Be aware of the space between you and other people.

Okay. Good. Okay.

Let's sit. Let's come on in closer. Let's have a small circle. Now that we're warmed up.

And Wendy, you were the last. Coming, coming. Great.

Okay, so let's just pause for a moment. Let's find our space.

Again, it's fun and interesting, but hopefully you get that this is actually the practice. Not simply a game for fun. It's also really sensing how we connect to self, other, and space. Where we lose that connection.

I'd like the circle to be a little bit more inclusive, more circle-like. Move that chair back, maybe, would be good. You can come a little closer if you like.

Great. Okay. Continue on.

## What is living

*[Participant 2:]* I'm Karen.

So, yeah, one thing I've been really noticing lately. Well, my daughter had a child. So, yeah, she's our granddaughter, and we're watching her grow, and it's been really important, as I'm watching her grow, and what we're doing around her, in regards to what I'm doing around myself.

So she — in our culture, there's circles, and I'm a kookum, so I'm a grandmother, and the kookum looks after water. So I bathe her on Sunday nights, and that later on will be looking after her emotional needs.

And Mosom is the little grandfather, and so my partner, he is in charge of air, so he's in charge of the stories, the family stories. So he tells her stories of Willow and Taji, my son, when they were little.

And that her parents are in charge of earth, so they feed her and all that stuff, right? And the diapers.

So she has this circle around her. And then Joseph, he's our mentor, he's our teacher. He looks after the spiritual needs of the family, so he does the rituals. So when she was born, he did a prayer circle, and he did the smudging. You probably don't know about that.

So there's a real sense that just Willow and Anton aren't enough. That it's everybody. And then there's circles out from our family that are going to help Aurora, and look after Aurora.

And so she was born in September. And since that, I've just been thinking about my own circle, and my water, earth, fire, spirit teachers, and this circle being one of my teachers, and how it's not enough just to have one. You know, how I have different teachers for different needs.

And yeah, so it's just been reconfirming, or interesting to know, and also just how that is going to really hold her, that that is going to really ground her, and me. And so just reflecting home.

Yeah, who are my teachers, and am I calling on them? You know, do I call on them or not? Do I know how to call on them? So that's what I'm exploring, and wanting to be held more, wanting to allow that more.

And being really grateful for this, being really grateful for the practice. And also wanting growth, you know, is why I'm coming in, but knowing how hard it is. You know, it's really hard.

And I was telling them at lunch how Aurora, she turned over, right? Like that's the first thing. And she was flipped over. And it's just so hard, because everybody's got to be in agreement, and she's got to want to turn over, and Willow's sitting there, come on, Aurora. The rest of her life to turn over.

*[Russell:]* Thank you, Karen.

*[Silence 55 seconds]*

*[Participant 3:]* I really loved what you just said about circles and connections.

I'm really happy to be in this community, and feel everybody's presence.

As for me, there's something about really believing myself to be part of the circle. Believing that circle to truly include me. Not to be outside of the circle.

And to, if I can come away with the really deep conviction, belief, knowledge that I am a part of this circle, and the circle supported me. Oh, really, that in itself is moving forward.

The exercise this morning, being seen when I was visualizing myself — I didn't have a sense of me looking at me, but it was a sense, almost like there were beings looking at me, and reaching toward me, especially when we were doing things of that feeling of inclusion.

It's there. I mean, I know it's real, but there's still a place in me that isn't convinced. It isn't really.

So that's where I feel this work is so important for me. It's giving me an opportunity to—

*[Participant 4:]* My name is Will.

What comes now is that I'm very grateful to my family, to the people I work with, and all the people I am with, day long, to allow me to come here and share this experience with you.

And they ask me why I'm going to California to do meditation.

And I come because it's wonderful. And it will be an opportunity to be exposed to people, and to experiments I could not do the same way in France, or in Germany, or here.

And I like being there because it's so different. And it's really feeding me in a way. I can grow, but that is difficult to explain this way. So I'm glad I can explain to you.

Thank you.

*[Russell:]* Thank you very much.

Peter.

*[Participant 5:]* The ball exchange, the game we just played, is an apt analogy for an ongoing dilemma which I find myself living out. And this being a safe place to really live it out, and be explicit about my various feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with my ability to effectively communicate with people.

And the emphasis on the giving and taking — the giving being aware of the receiver, the receiver being aware of the giving.

And so I'm asking, actually, help, and I don't know what form it will take. But I feel like I'm in a circle of friends that can be of great assistance in terms of whatever they are of a mind. Let me know.

And what I mean by that is, I just — I'm grateful for being in a milieu where correction is possible, correction in a kindly sense. And I'm looking, I'm longing for a growth in that area.

So, first, one of the things that I'm hungry for is more skills in companionship Focusing, specifically the track which I'm looking forward to, and feeling I need.

So this is a great opportunity for me.

You know, I feel as if when you started earlier, we were invited to place yourself on your life journey and do some kind of — well, whatever it was. I don't know what it was for other people. I mean assessment, or evaluation. For me it was an image, and it is a tree. And it was a tree, a big tree.

And I'm feeling like I am still growing and branching out, and I haven't always felt that way. There have been times in my life when the sap was — it was like it just didn't feel like it was moving. And I haven't always known how to handle it.

And I think in the kind of luxury of aging, it's becoming a priority to understand that that is just essential for me, to keep growing, and to honor my own truths.

And the tree, even if it has a phloem and xylem, it goes up and down, both ways. It's not like all the stuff is coming just out of the ground. And it has a wondrous thing of fragility, that it stands at all.

And I feel as if I'm very lucky to still be out there branching. And one of these groups of branches right now is this area, this cluster of, hopefully, blossoms of communication.

It's been a long time coming, because I reacted to a lot of things in my personal history and became much more the expressor, and the listener be damned, you know?

And so I'm having to learn. And I feel the skills are available, although I must admit I relapse, and sometimes my motivation gets like — you know, the truest way I can speak is in images, and they don't get it. What am I supposed to do, dumb down, you know?

And I feel this. It's a conflict for me. Even with teaching ATM, I accuse myself sometimes of being less communicative than I want to be with my students. And, you know, simple — my wife will say, just be simpler. My supervisor will say, just be simpler. And I try, but it's no longer alive for me.

So I'm on that edge of trying to retain the truth of what I want to say, but also have it transfer.

You know. So that's this preoccupation.

And you can imagine, I think, that it's very much alive here. But thirty people, you know, and facile with language, and I can be courteous and all that stuff. But sometimes I am coming away feeling like I didn't really say what I wanted to say.

So it's a kind of identity crisis without any crisis.

Now, goodbye now. So.

*[Russell:]* Peter, did you feel like you got to communicate what you wanted to communicate?

*[Participant 5:]* Right now, there's just no end to it. There's just no end to the question of what do I want, and with whom, and how.

*[Russell:]* Would it be at all helpful to hear back from somebody what they heard from you?

*[Participant 5:]* No, it would be more than helpful.

*[Russell:]* Would anybody be willing to — or a number of us could say, it doesn't have to be right, you know, but what did you get? What did you receive from Peter in his quest to communicate right here with us?

*[Participant 6:]* I can only share part, Peter, because some of us, our mind kind of wanted our own stuff to share with you.

But I was hearing that you were seeking the ability to communicate better. Some of what you really wanted to say, but it wasn't always coming out the way you wanted it to come out. And sometimes

you'd walk away and say, it's not really what I wanted to say. It's not what I really wanted to communicate.

You're hoping to strengthen the skills to speak from within, to communicate more clearly what you're really feeling, and be able to walk away feeling comfortable that you've achieved that.

And it sounded like this is a forum to ask — I don't want to use the word practice, but it's a forum to test different strategies of communication, and feel comfortable in doing that.

And even to do that would be hard, because in some ways you're asking people to be compassionate listeners while you're trying. You know what I'm saying? I don't know if I captured it.

*[Participant 5:]* I was with you until the very last, second to last sentence you said. Even to do it would be hard — for me, or for others?

*[Participant 6:]* For you. You know, because I don't think it'd be hard for us. We were hearing this, and this is a skill that, if I heard you correctly, this is a skill that you would like to develop, and to be able to communicate from within, or whatever you feel should be communicated.

And so this is a forum where you can actually begin to do that, knowing that we can hopefully listen.

And I'm hearing you might like a little feedback, but I was not sure, and I would want to check that out with you, if you ever wanted to spend that time together in a dyad or something, and try it.

Was I close to hearing part of it?

*[Participant 5:]* Yes.

*[Russell:]* Great, thank you.

Someone else. Something that was important for you in hearing Peter.

*[Participant 7:]* So, to share something that really resonated for me. There was a lot, but the piece in your role as an ATM teacher, and the challenge I heard you speak to, of having what seems like a kind of deep experience, or something — some way you're understanding it — and trying to translate that in a way that people who aren't there can get to that level of understanding. Something like that.

*[Participant 5:]* That's one version of it. It's one opinion. Thank you.

*[Participant 8:]* So, as I was listening to you, Peter, I find you very fascinating, and I enjoy listening to you.

It's always fascinating, because it seems like a ride that I never know where it's going to take me until you get me there. Really, I mean, there's something really magical about it. It sort of goes.

And one of the things I was thinking when you were speaking was, I wish that I could put a tally at every word that you use that I have no idea what the meaning of it would be. Like, I think you used it one time.

*[Russell:]* This is very helpful. Keep going.

*[Participant 8:]* There was a word that you used, and I may be butchering it, but I believe it was trigittery. It was a reference to the tree that you were experiencing.

So anyway, I was very fascinated at the level of intelligence, and the obvious effort that you've put forward into words that are outside of the common day language. It made me very interested to know, what are these words that he's speaking.

And then when you did speak to the point of really wanting to get to a way to communicate — like what was just explained — that you don't want to dumb it down, you don't want to change who you are or what you're feeling, but there is something in you that wants to have that message be clear to you, and to whoever you're speaking to.

That really resonated with me as well, as far as sometimes feeling like what they're wanting to experience, or get across, is so big, and to put it into words really makes it feel very small. And so I find that maybe using these words, whatever these words are, might seem to at some point help you feel like you're making the words closer to what you're feeling.

*[Participant 5:]* You're bringing me back to — every day I get a jazz clip, YouTube, and there was a title, I Want to Talk to You. With John Coltrane and his classic quartet. And it's a ten-minute piece, and it just tore me apart. I just saved it and played it, because it was one of those. Because it probably will again. It's just like—

This, the truthfulness, and the almost unresolvability of the dilemma that he's demonstrating. Because he starts with a kind of a standard, taking-turns idiom, you know, statement of an exposition, and then the band — everybody else, the three — and he kind of is playing parallel alongside. I had this image of like, they're in this arcade, and he's in the courtyard walking alongside, and there's — it was a kind of, to me it was a sublime expression of a longing which could not be fulfilled.

Simply could not, if he was going to play what he heard. And it wasn't that he wasn't playing with them. I don't want to get into musicology or something, but it was much more emotional for me. But it was as if, for him to be true, to play that music that he heard, they supported him, and he did return, but had to go out as far as he could to make the statement that was such a yearning, in his sound, in his music, and the pathos of it.

Just moved me to tears. And when you talk about — you say the tragedy may honor the image, and the national silence, but it lost you, didn't it? That you can feel infected, maybe alienated, you know.

So that's my situation.

*[Russell:]* Yeah, yeah, you can feel that longing, that deep longing, and that really communicates beyond the words.

Yeah, and there's another piece. Can I bring another piece that I heard, that went over quickly, but I think touched me.

Something about, you've been the expressor. And the learning about the listening, and the receiving of the ball.

And maybe part of the — maybe the other doesn't get completely what's living in here. But I wonder, and it really is a genuine wondering, if receiving more completely their experience might help satisfy. Not get rid of — I'm not solving anything — but help complete something where you feel true in your communication.

But now it's completing itself by you're really receiving, as you just did, the experience of the other. Hearing and not hearing. Being touched and not getting it complete. And all of that living together.

*[Participant 5:]* It's a good wonder. Yeah, it really is a wonder. Yeah.

*[Participant 8:]* One thing, because one thing is that, just in something that you — which, if I go back, to me was a little bit disjointed, in that you said maybe you lost him, he lost you, and that you may have alienated him, when I heard the opposite of that.

I heard that it grabbed his attention, and actually that was anything but alienation. So maybe there's just a filter issue as well. It just suggests that. Just a filtering that you may have as well, because I could be wrong, but that wasn't the message that I heard. And I felt that it was positive, actually, feedback.

And personally, I would suggest the same thing from my perspective, that I just find you very unique and engaging. And have never felt like a listener that was being tortured in any way.

Just that there might be another side to that, that the listener is experiencing. That it's possible that they're hung up on the word, going, what was that? But you might be reading it.

*[Participant 5:]* That's wonderful.

So that's so keen, that discernment, because I might get overly attached to a detail, an expectation, and really feeling that the tree needs to be — and that's the word for it in certain circles. But it's all wonderful feedback.

*[Russell:]* Yeah, and we're going to leave it there and move on.

*[Participant 5:]* Okay, but thank you.

*[Russell:]* Thank you. Helping us engage.

*[Participant 9:]* I'm Aaron.

I'm going to check in, feel in touch, unfold, and share.

So I notice, as I'm checking in, that there's a lot that is up for me right now, and has been up in the digestion, and the practices, and everything I've been working with. And reminding myself to just connect down here.

Can you hear?

*[Russell:]* Yes, I can. A little better.

*[Participant 9:]* Okay, fine.

So let me see again what's to come.

Something that's up for me, around an interest in exploring space this week, is connected with an image that I shared with someone I was doing Focusing with.

There was a day when — I don't remember exactly what happened. I hadn't slept well. Mesa had wanted my attention at night. Carl had taken Mesa. I was going to get a short nap early in the day, before I started work, or something like that.

And the cat came up on top of my chest, and Carl and I had this humorous conversation after, where I said, I'm so craving more of my own deep connection with myself. I feel so much in working and mothering.

And Carl laughed and said, I am craving more time with you too. And Mesa wants more of you too. And even when I tried to take the nap, the cat said, where have I been? They want more of me.

You know, what is off with this? I'm reminded of one of the group calls we had, where you said something about the layering of attention. And I have an intuition that space is going to be very helpful with that.

I related to the in or out. Something about that clicked for me. And I know, in my role as a teacher also, sometimes one of the places it gets niggly for me in my inner life is when there's like three people after class who want my attention at the same time. Like, it really kind of — I don't do well. There's something. I feel like I need to give everyone my attention.

And that's also in that image of Mesa needs me, and I need me, and Carl needs me, and the cat needs me, you know?

So there's something. I have experiences of — definitely on my cushion, and at times in my life — but I'm imagining and hoping that exploring that sort of space, and space of mind, and being almost just, you know, physical surrounding space will — I don't know. I have a sense that might be helpful in that regard.

And, excuse me, there's something else that I want to share. Let me see how this wants to come.

I'm really appreciating — I just feel so much better in the last year. I've shared just very briefly in the group. I feel like I'm in recovery from working way too damn hard, where my spiritual practice was the most stressful thing in my life. Really, seriously.

And I had my relationship with my teacher of many years support that experience and view. And I feel there's been so much shedding and unwinding. And even just feeling safe, in this group of safe people at lunch — I'm not gripped that Mesa's going to disturb your deep practice while you're on retreat. Like, it's okay. That's a lot of my experience, just that it's not so tight about this heavy thing we're doing together.

I'm loving that.

Is it okay if I talk for ten minutes?

*[Russell:]* Go ahead, yeah, keep going.

*[Participant 9:]* So, I've been really touched by the work of Brené Brown. I don't know if some of you are familiar with her.

She's — I've discovered her, I don't remember how, but she's had a couple of TED Talks that have really gone viral, about shame and vulnerability. And I've read her books, and I just really appreciate her work.

And one thing that I resonated with was the vulnerability that's in really taking in the good, you know?

I'm feeling the clock ticking too, and I'm sorry.

*[Russell:]* Take your time. Take your time.

*[Participant 9:]* So, one of the things she points out is the many ways we defend against vulnerability. That vulnerability is so important in living a wholehearted life. And that view has been really wonderful and important for me the last few years.

And this particular piece about the vulnerability of actually really taking in how much I love my kid, or how beautiful it is, or how great it is to sit here in this group. You know, there's a way I notice that my sort of — I don't even know what to call it — heavy, serious spiritual practice.

Like, if I'm feeling too spacious and happy and heartful, other people are suffering. Let me breathe at it. You know, like, it's almost a defense against that. Being touched. I don't know if I'm making sense.

So that's an edge for me. Like, it's okay to be happy and feel good. I mean — it's hard. It's surprising how hard that is. To really let myself take in the good.

And one more thing, if I can.

I saw something. I was reading an article online. And I saw in the current issue of the Shambhala Sun — they have a little excerpt online. It's a Buddhist magazine I don't subscribe to, but I just saw this little piece that exactly pushed this button, so nicely for me again.

It said, a Tibetan teacher, not even one of the hardcore old-school ones, but, you know, who said — the headline, which grabbed me right off the bat, said, if it feels too good, it's probably not authentic Buddhism. And the teachings are meant to make you feel like shit about recognizing your self-grasping, and your unkindness, and your, you know, mood.

And I just felt like—

Yeah.

And we've had a lot of discussions about that. I'm like, it's the hard thing with mass teaching. It's like, actually, you know what? There's probably a lot of people who need to hear that. And it may be, in a certain way, like, you want to take the feel-good part and you don't want to look at the hard stuff.

Right. But I don't even know what else to say about that. That's been in the air. And I guess the last thing that wants to come about that is — maybe I don't care if it's what somebody else calls authentic fucking Buddhism. Maybe I'm more interested in what's supporting life.

*[Russell:]* Yeah. Yeah. Thank you.

Yeah, let's just sit for a moment.

So many traditions are only interested in seeking, and not interested in finding. It's okay to find.

*[Participant 9:]* I just have to say, somebody has to realize that just because something's in print, it doesn't mean it's the truth. It's also, you know, having our deep association with this tradition, a very respected teacher. Not just the print.

*[Russell:]* So I know the teacher you're quoting, and I can tell you about it some other time.

I can give you my opinions — don't. He's a good filmmaker.

Is that you? Hey. Welcome, welcome.

*[Participant 10:]* Hello.

*[Russell:]* Welcome, Barbara. Let's make a little room. You want a chair, or a cushion? We have stuff, I think. Is there a pillow over there?

Thank you, Karen. Here, there's one coming. And then let's create a little bit more space.

*[Participant 10:]* Hi.

*[Participant 11:]* Got to see Barbara and her daughter in New York last month.

*[Russell:]* So we are in a process of — your turn.

So, we can describe to you later the whole thing, but right now people are just offering a brief reflection, for giving their name, just to make sure we have that, and just whatever they want to say about what's living, what's coming forward, what the next is, or what's wanted or not wanted during this time, or anything that is known about what's working in you at this time, on your path.

And, well, yeah, we've got a number more, so maybe you can wait, kind of get in the flow of things, and then somebody maybe at dinnertime can go over a little bit of the lessons, and kind of images that we're working with about space.

It'd be interesting to hear what people remember. That would be interesting. Maybe we'll do that right here. What happened during the meditation, what images were coming there. Yeah, that'll be good. We'll go over the day a little later. For all of us.

You ready for the meeting?

*[Participant 12:]* Yes.

So, and the strategy that if I wait until the afternoon, I wouldn't be as vulnerable. I could get real rational and present my reflections. But I fall in the category of what's coming forth, and what do I want, and what don't I want.

And just breathe through. The ball is a great symbol for me today. It's a great metaphor, because probably more than fifty years ago, I took who I was and kind of buried it someplace. And how it became — and became somebody else.

Sorry. First time explaining, it's so hard.

So, after many years, about, oh, six or seven years ago, I realized that I wasn't who I thought I was. And what became apparent was those feelings of whether it's loneliness, or disconnection, that most people didn't know about. I hid it very well. But I couldn't hide it from myself after a while.

And so I kind of changed my life, in the hopes of finding out who I really was, who I was on the surface, or what I was perceived to be. And to spend a couple years kind of exploring, and not a whole lot of success.

So I decided I would take Russell Delman's workshop, and he was going to fix me. I was going to find my true self, and it was going to work. So here I am.

And I was really hoping, after the first or second session, that there'd be this great awareness. A lightning bolt would come down, the ball would crack open, and there I was. And it probably didn't happen because I probably would have had a heart attack. But it didn't happen.

I was getting really frustrated. It's like, why can't I get a better sense of who I really am, and what's really important to me, and how I can relate better with people that I'm particularly close to.

And so, anyway, the program has been very good for me, because the shell that I built around whoever I was, it's gotten more permeable, softer. And I think many of the practices that I had done, and are part of this program, kind of like punching little holes in this little case.

I had a really good experience. Actually, I had a really good Focusing group with Peter. It really helped me see that the intellectual side of me did not want the rest of me to discover who I was. There was this real fighting between — I would have said before the article, my mind and my wisdom body. Now the article says they're all one and the same, so now I got this problem.

But at the time, it was clear in me, because the mind really didn't want me to — it really fought me, finding out who the inner part really was.

But the practices are really kind of punching holes in. There's a part of me that is starting to seep out. And as it seeps out, the problem is that it usually seeps out with vulnerability, tears. It's kind of scary.

And the other problem is, it doesn't happen when I want it to. You know, like being in a concert, and music could trip me and just start crying. Or I can be somewhere else.

And so, but it is starting to seep out. And I guess, just in kind of closing, it's the environment here. Probably is what I was referring to this morning. I was sort of saying, why do you feel — I'm saying it's got to be safe, or I'm not coming out. I'm just going to stay back in that little ball, and be who I became.

But just, it's like Peter was saying, you know, because there's a forum that probably lets me test a little bit. It kind of allows it out a little bit at a time.

So that's what I'm working on. It's kind of like trying to get a better sense of who I am as a person. And if I look a little confused sometimes, or a little distant, it's because I'm not there. I need to be capable of being more present, both to who I'm with, but actually to who I am, that I don't really know.

Thank you.

That's about all I'm going to say with authority.

*[Participant 13:]* I had about five things lined up to say. I had about five things lined up to say by the time I got to Bob, and they've all gone by the wayside.

I was very eager to get to Bob, after Bob, because I'm pretty much in the same situation as Bob is.

I don't know who I am, and I was hoping that I would have found myself by now, but I'm still seeking, and perhaps I'm afraid of finding.

And part of me is afraid to share. I like all of the people in this group, and I feel very safe. I don't know what is stopping me from sharing. Again, it's that sense of vulnerability.

And I keep coming back for more. It's scary. It's eye-opening.

Like Russell said this morning, or just a little while ago, about, you see seven beautiful things and one lousy thing, and you remember the one lousy thing. That's totally me. I mean, I am so in tune with that.

But I also, through these practices, am beginning to see the bright side of things. And I just hope that there will be a time when I can stop seeking, and when I can start finding.

So I believe that.

*[Russell:]* Let's just pause for a moment, and let all that that's coming.

This is — everyone speaking is a part of everyone here.

You know, whether it's your universe that the others are a part of, or whether it's that you're a part of the other universe, we share these questions, these longings, these satisfactions.

Some, of course, we resonate more, some a little less. But I think to just sense how each sharing touches something in there.

*[Silence 47 seconds]*

*[Russell:]* And let me just see a hand on how many people have not spoken.

Right, so what I'd like to do is pause. Take a very, very — just a bathroom break, because I want to drop us into some movement. The others will get to speak, but I feel like we need a little shift right now. There's enough that's working in us, is my sense.

So we'll do just a little shift. We'll do some movement, and the others will get to speak.

So, again, not a long break, please. Let's continue in, hopefully, like five or seven minutes.