Movement lesson

Angela 2 — Week 3, Day 3, Session 4 — 59 minutes

Summary: With blindfolds on, the group learns to navigate space kinesthetically, then lies down and touches one side of the body at a time. They notice differences of sensation and space, share words for what they feel, and later cross the midline. Standing, they inhabit the space around them before opening their eyes.

With the blindfold

[Russell:] Yeah, so sit towards the front of your mat, and put on your blindfold. I recommend closing your eyes softly with your blindfold on.

And again, if you need a second blindfold, cause you're not happy with how much light's coming through, feel free to use one of these also.

And you're always, as with all our practices — I completely bow to your freedom. And so if at any point you're uncomfortable, and it's a discomfort that feels like it's not helpful, you're always free to take off your blindfold. But I encourage you to stay with it.

We're learning to navigate more kinesthetically, and open to our sense of our physical body and our spatial body, or the space around us.

But just with the blindfold, notice how it is to just have it on as you relate to it.

In some ways, it's not terribly different than closing your eyes, but very often people feel it's quite different. You can't just open your eyes and see.

And find your way to standing.

Just take a few moments to navigate the boundaries of your mat. And maybe you can kind of approximate what the size of your mat would be, since you're not using one. But kind of navigate. And with these practices, when we go off our mat, of course we don't go running around. We're conscious of space, and you can use your hands to navigate also, sensing the space around you. But notice how you orient yourself. What helps you to find your sense of directionality?

I'm in front of the fireplace, so turn and orient to me, the image you're facing. Face the wall that I would be. You don't have to face me as the person, but face this wall. So, organized.

And turn 180 degrees to face the opposite wall. You know, how do you determine — how do you navigate 180 degrees all the way around to face the opposite? So you're facing the wall of the elevator.

Listen to how you develop your references for 90 degrees to your left, and turn to face the wall that you're listening toward, without knowing where.

And 180 degrees, facing the wall with the window.

Move towards the front of your mat, the front edge of your mat.

[Participant:] Front is by the window?

[Russell:] Front is towards the window, yes. So you're facing the windows. You're facing the windows, and you're towards the front edge of your mat.

And feel, within your own comfort, staying on your mat, move quickly backwards a few steps.

[Participant:] Move backwards?

[Russell:] Yep. You're at the front of your mat. You can move some more forward. Okay, and then move quickly forward a few steps.

Just feel your breathing. Feel how you sense into the space around you. What you notice within your body.

Is there any sense of being able to play with space, play with yourself, or does it feel a little threatening? Just notice how you organize it on a feeling level, what the feeling sense is there.

And then just move in freely, just kind of exploring yourself and space. And again, if you're gonna — you don't wanna throw your arms laterally unless you know that there's a lot of space next to you. But yeah, so if you're in the middle of your mat, you can free your —

So just feel what it's like, how you feel comfortable moving, what directions — some directions you'd rather avoid moving in.

Like someone mentioned, what if you were a five-year-old playing? What would playing be like? Being able to see, and you're free to move in any way you want. So, kind of liberate the pictures of what it means to let yourself move in this space.

And you stay more or less in the territory of what a mat would be.

Great.

On your back

[Russell:] Okay, and please come onto your back. See if you can find a way to have your head away from me and your feet toward me.

When we do these practices, sometimes I'll walk around and invite you to shift a little bit, or if I'm concerned about people being too close to each other.

And just feel how — pleasant, unpleasant, interesting — or what if I just have the blindfold on, lying here?

Have a sense, an overall sense. If you thought of a line dividing you into right and left, if one side of your body is more available for sensing. If it has a kind of — if it was a color, or if it was a brightness, one side would be brighter or duller, or closer or further, larger or smaller.

Are there any general characteristics, right side as compared to left side, that seem to permeate the whole side, in addition to whatever individual differences there might be — leg and bad leg?

When you extend your attention into space, left and right, is there any different attitude, or sense, or interest, ease of sensing into?

The right side

[Russell:] And bend your legs.

Take your right hand and just touch the right side of your face, and without crossing the midline, experiment with stroking the right side of your face and skull.

Come just saying hello, sometimes pausing and letting the hand rest, and actually thinking into the volume of where you're touching. And then other times you're more on the surface, just like you're bringing it out of the background.

You're letting your — called your interoceptors — the capacity, through kinesthesia and proprioception, to sense your body sense. That I'm here, I feel myself. It's a basic sense of self. We want to grow.

Include your neck.

You're free to move in any ways that help you to touch your head and neck, all the way through the back of your head, as long as you stay on the right side. We want to stay sided during this exploration. You're free to shift yourself, and also notice the breathing and the quality of your own touching.

Let's stay with the head, neck, front of the neck, side of the neck, back of the neck, back of the skull, side of the skull, around the ear.

And then just pause for a moment. Sense the afterglow in the skull and face.

And with your right hand, begin to touch your right shoulder, in the space between your neck and your shoulder, and again, free to move any way you want.

Touch the whole territory of your right torso — chest, the back, all the way down to your pelvis. So take your time, give you a few minutes to explore, bringing your presence, your attention, to each part that you can touch.

And we're interested in everything, from the quality of the touch, to how it feels to touch yourself there, to how your breathing responds.

Yes, you're limited to your right hand, and you're limited to the right side of your torso. And you're free to move any way that is helpful for you. So just the right side of the torso. That means not the right leg. It's from the shoulder to the pelvis.

And each place that you touch, those cells kind of light up in your brain. Those cells come forward. And having your consciousness there, your presence is like a meeting, a live event.

[Silence 35 seconds]

And then pause temporarily, just again, sensing the influence, the after effect.

Sense of the space inside your body and around your body.

Are there any differences in the breathing on the right side and left side?

[Silence 32 seconds]

Good, and then with your right hand, continue on through your pelvis, down through your leg, all the way to your foot. And again, free to move in any way that is interesting, fun, helpful, as if you want every millimeter of yourself touched as much as you can without straining.

And feel the response to your own touch.

[Silence 31 seconds]

And notice. Can there be a very light movement of attention where you're sensing yourself, you're sensing your touch and your body, and there's a light movement where, almost like from the outside, you're noticing yourself there? You're noticing the qualities, the atmosphere of your exploration, and you're noticing with great kindness how it is for your physical self exploring this on the floor. From that larger space, you're noticing.

And explore your higher right side with your right hand.

And when there's a place that you feel like pausing, sensing into more deeply, let yourself pause there. Sense of living into that area with more care, more presence, more love, more intimacy, connectedness.

And notice if there are moments when the body becomes an object that you're doing to, and notice when that's not so.

And come onto your left side and continue. So you don't have to stay on your side, but begin lying on your left side and feel where you can go from there with your touch. What happens if you roll a little forward, and do your best to stay to the right of the midline.

Different neurological processes get involved as we cross the midline, and we're wanting to cultivate this first, the sidedness.

Feel when your breath wants to respond. Does your breath sometimes respond to the touch? A sigh, or exhale, or deeper breath.

And then just come onto your back and pause there. Take a moment to sense differences right and left, and differences in the space right and left.

What you notice

[Russell:] If you can verbalize any differences in your body or in the space, let's share some of that. Open our attention maybe to some things we're not perceiving yet. If you have something, I'll repeat it for you.

[Participant:] What feels soft?

[Russell:] The right side feels soft.

[Participant:] And space. Right space. Expansive.

[Russell:] Expansive.

[Participant:] Expansive.

[Russell:] So we want to hear the words that resonate for us and grow our vocabulary for experiencing the body experience. Expansive space, soft.

[Participant:] Warm over there?

[Participant:] Light.

[Russell:] Light. In what sense, light?

[Participant:] Lighter, in the sense of weight — as in weight — but also lighter in the sense there is no more dark space outside.

[Russell:] Lighter in the sense that it's a lighter weight, but also like there's no dark places on that side. Very interesting.

[Participant:] Right side's more permeable, less boundary.

[Russell:] More permeable, less boundary.

As you hear the descriptions, try them on, like trying on clothes. You might have the same, you might not. We want to widen our capacity for experience.

[Participant:] Right side's happier.

[Russell:] Happier, happier. And are there any specific sensations that let you know what happier feels like?

[Participant:] Expansive, I guess. It may be expansive, but happier feels like the right word there.

[Participant:] Luscious.

[Russell:] Luscious.

[Participant:] Calling for more.

[Russell:] Luscious, and want some more.

[Participant:] The left side has a sharper distinction between the outer and inner.

[Russell:] A sharper distinction between outer and inner on the left side.

[Participant:] So the right side just kind of like dissolves into space.

[Russell:] Like dissolves. The right side dissolves into space, yeah.

[Participant:] Right side is grounded, sinking into the ground.

[Russell:] Right side sinking into the ground.

[Participant:] Right side feels warmer inside than on the skin.

[Russell:] Warmer inside than on the skin.

And let's tune into the space to your right and left. And again, it could be that that question makes no sense right now, that's fine. But extend attention into the world that's to the right of you, and the world that's to the left of you, and just notice if there are any different qualities.

[Participant:] Softer.

[Participant:] Welcoming.

[Russell:] Welcoming. Isn't it — what does welcoming feel like in a body? This is so helpful, to have a kind of reference for what we all know, sorta. To really feel, oh, that's what welcoming is. That's a way welcoming is.

[Participant:] More alive.

[Russell:] More alive. The space is more alive.

[Participant:] Expanded.

[Russell:] Expanded.

[Participant:] More space.

[Russell:] Okay, let's just pause there. Feel, then. Live here with these subtle, and maybe sometimes not so subtle, distinctions.

The left side

[Russell:] And take your left hand and bring it to the left side of your face and skull, and begin. First just touch, and pause there, and let that moment of contact be really present for you.

Touching the self is so fascinating — neurologically, and emotionally, and psychologically. Just for the left, to touch, to feel your own touching. So, left hand to the left side. Not crossing the midline, just on the left side.

And begin to explore your own touch, stroking and sometimes pausing. And include the neck. And also include the back of the hand. Different — see, a different physiology. There are more temperature receptors, for example, on the back of your hand than on the front of your hand. But moms will often take your temperature with the back of the hand.

And feel your neck. And then you can continue on down through your shoulder and torso. Let's not include the leg yet, but just the left hand on the left side of the midline, and you're free to move in any way that helps you. So, left side of your torso, with any part of your left hand.

[Silence 41 seconds]

Let your breathing respond. Let yourself explore. How am I doing this, on all these levels — movement, touch, feeling, attention — and sometimes just standing way back, like the corners of the room, and turning the light around. Noticing the one on the floor.

Listen to how the breath receives your touch.

Good. And let's pause for a few moments. Let's pause.

Bend your legs, and let your left hand explore from your pelvis down to your foot. And let the right hand rest on the ground, so that you can really emphasize — bring forward in your brain these sensations, and just investigating the whole process. Free to move in any way.

[Silence 40 seconds]

So there's some sense of doing. There's also the sense of receiving, of being the one who's being touched. I wonder if you can sense, or do you have the feeling of being more the one who's touching?

And then there's the space that can notice it all. And feel free to change position and touch your whole left side, any place, from your leg through your head, any place.

Does something happen when you switch from emphasizing being the toucher to being the one who's being touched, the receiver? Or maybe that's where you are spontaneously.

Can you touch yourself and background the sense of being the toucher — actually emphasizing the receiver?

And feel how the one in there receives.

And pause, and sense how your sense of your body shifts, and your sense of space.

[Silence 56 seconds]

Crossing the midline

[Russell:] And move your right hand to the right side of your face, and then move your right hand over to the left side of your face. We've experimented before with this difference. And go back and forth a few times, so that you maybe can get some kind of sense of how it lives differently in your brain and yourself, to cross that midline and to bring forward.

Because some people can even feel almost like another person touching the other side.

And begin to let your right hand stroke the left side of your body. Of course, now you can stroke your left arm, which you couldn't do so well with your left hand.

And just occasionally, as you explore the left side of your body with your right hand, occasionally touch with your left hand the same place, and see if there's really a distinctly different quality to how you receive and how you give the touch. On the same side, and then from the other side.

So we're — yeah. So you can use both hands just on the left side of the body, and compare how they are. And again, you're free to move, you're free to change position. It's helpful to get different orientations in space. Maybe even to come on your belly sometimes, or on your side, or sitting, or anything. Feel free to play.

So we'll stay touching the left side, but now you're free to use both hands. You're noticing how it might be significantly different. We'll just stay touching the left side.

[Silence 51 seconds]

And just pause for a moment. Rest here and feel. Did something else come in? Something else occur that's in addition to when you were just touching with the same-sided hand? Some other kind of feeling of yourself, and or the space, around the left side and the right?

Those of you working with kids know that this crossing the midline, this ability to connect to the opposite side, is a very significant part of neurological development in kids, sense of movement and cognitively.

What happens when we really have right and left living together?

And then with your left hand, come to the right side of your face. Just feel, and go back and forth to your left side and to your right side, and feel if you stroke your neck. Doesn't it have a kind of

different quality to be with your left hand on your right side? Use the back of the hand, the front of the hand.

And then gradually feel how you could touch more of your right side with your left hand, when it gets interesting to compare it with your right hand on your right side. So now you're free, but stay on your right side of the midline.

[Silence 57 seconds]

Feel free to touch anywhere on your right side, and feel free to sit, roll, move to any position that feels interesting.

Feel the influence on your breath.

[Silence 42 seconds]

Sitting

[Russell:] Find your way up to sitting, facing the windows. The wall with the windows.

Notice your sense of your whole body, as well as the space around you.

And place your right hand on the right side of your head and the left hand on the left, and staying with the hand on each side, explore your skull, your neck, down. You're free to go down your whole body in sitting, but keeping each hand on its own side, so it's right to right, left to left.

Yeah. And how do you know where the midline is? Can you sense, if you bring your hands towards that midline, something speaks to you about where you would cross it? Within a half inch, likely, maybe even a quarter inch, maybe even a tenth of an inch, you could feel, oh, I'm over. Something tells me.

Include your back as much as you can also, and the backs of your hands also.

And really find a way to touch your legs in sitting.

And then pausing there, sitting for a moment, just sensing what's alive in your body, the space around you.

And then let your right hand come to the left side of your face, and the left to the right, and just feel, to the best of your ability, how you could explore a little bit the skull and the face and the arm.

Feel, as much as you can without straining, how different it feels. And you can touch anywhere, but on the opposite side.

And you don't have to move them exactly symmetrically. You can do one and then the other, cause it will impede you if you try to keep them symmetrical all the time. Although it's interesting to feel it symmetrically, some of —

And again, feel your breathing respond.

And feel how the one being touched receives the touch. How it is to be touched in this way.

And take the point of view of the toucher. What's the quality of the toucher? Like the way this one touches? You want something a little different?

And occasionally we just step all the way back and we notice the whole thing. Touch, touching, being touched, receiving it all. Standing back, that larger space.

Okay, and pause for a moment. Feel the inner sense that comes after you've crossed the midline and worked with that. It's neurologically quite complex, and integrative.

Standing

[Russell:] Come on up to standing.

Just take a few moments to orient. And as you're standing, stroke same-handed, same side, your whole self. And then once you've done the same side, do the opposite.

Include as much of your back as you can, not straining, not simply frontal.

And then just stand. Sense the whole quality of yourself standing here.

Maybe some sense of vibration in the body.

Feel the space around your body actually move, in a way, as if, kind of with your hands and with yourself, you're feeling into the space right around you. So we begin to include the space, the arm's-distance space around us, in all directions. So let your arms move.

Don't throw them, in case you go over the mat at the same time as someone. If you touch somebody, just do it gently. That's what I'm saying. It's okay if we touch, but we don't want to do it vigorously.

You'll extend into all directions, as if this territory is part of you. Let your ankles, let your knees soften. So as you're kind of inhabiting the space around your body, you're also yielding in your body. It's not alien to you. It's like part of you, around you.

And you can change the direction you're facing anytime. You can bend your knees more. You can just really inhabit the spaces around yourself, extending your consciousness into the territory.

Breath respond.

Okay, and then just begin to move on your mat, moving a little forward and back, kind of inhabiting the space there for right now. Moving as freely as you feel comfortable in that local space. Letting your body sense in all directions.

Pause. The ground, and the up, the space around.

Eyes open

[Russell:] And please take off your blindfold.

Feel the response to light.

Especially in these first moments, feel how the bodily sense and the visual sense link, but normally so dominated by seeing. For a little while, they'll both be quite present. It's a different sense of self.

You feel ready to move through the space. Yeah, open eyes.

Feel your space.

[Silence 30 seconds]

Talk about this right now. Notice what stands out to you at lunchtime. As you connect to your world, you need to let the — you know, what stands out? What comes? This is gonna unfold over the days, the different sense of your body, the space around your body, and then integrating that with seeing.

Thank you. Nice lunch break.

Check if you have meetings with me. It's good to check, cause the days can kind of fold into each other, and we can lose track. So you know you have a meeting, or check to make sure you know that it's Saturday.