Gestures

Angela 2 — Week 3, Day 4, Session 2 — 26 minutes

Summary: Standing together, Russell invites a bodily sense of being here before the question of how one feels, then leads the horizontal gestures through shore and ocean. The movement becomes a way of showing up, and of widening care, held where time meets the timeless.

Standing here

Let's stand. Let's stand together.

Just grounding. This coming home to ourselves, just physically.

I want to say, before we even inquire into how am I, is I am here.

And sometimes the how am I comes with the I am here, but I would really encourage you to notice how often we go to the feeling state first.

And I'm suggesting that just here, just I'm here, I can sense myself, then, well, how am I here?

And if the how am I kind of comes like that, which it often will—we're often moved from feeling to feeling to feeling—a wonderful question. Okay, can I locate myself here? Behind, before, within, around, how I am?

Just I'm here.

Cultivating that bodily habit is a great, great gift to oneself.

And to feel the ground is a great part of that. Feel the breath.

We're always in a particular space, so to include something about the space around, the sound, what you see.

A little bit of emphasis on the internal—proprioceptive, kinesthetic, interoceptive phenomena—so that there's a sense of substantiality out of which we can allow the moment through us.

Horizontal gestures

Let's have the right foot forward and rest.

We're going to do the horizontal gestures. We've worked with these before.

I want to show you, there are some options about the hand position. I've been working with that quite a bit over the last months.

And so, one way I like to do it is with these fingertips towards the chest. But more recently I've been, as I did before, starting with the left hand down, the right hand on top.

Each of these gestures has a subtle but powerful effect. When I'm toward myself like this with my fingertips, when I'm resting like this, and the third one I'm using quite a bit is the standing mudra. And just letting that be against the chest, the left thumb in.

And, you know, after you get some experience, we can look at the different influences. I experience them differently.

Let's just rock forward and back with these different kinds of hand positions, sensing from your center.

And in a way, we're cultivating two main centers right now, the tanden and the heart center.

There, the touch to our chest literally stimulates these neurons—what they call sensory neurites—about 40,000 of them living in your chest, that are very connected to the processing of feeling, directly connected to the centers in your brain involved in feeling. This brain.

It's no coincidence, as we've said before, that our hands often go here when we're touched.

Feeling—we're moved from here. Feel.

We'll pause for a moment on foot, so we can sense that alignment to the vertical world.

This sense of inhaling forward, and opening into this horizontal world. We may need to space ourselves so that you have plenty of room.

And exhaling back towards your chest.

Breathe here a little bit so it's not strained.

Pause for a moment.

On the shore

So, I'd like to invite the image brought last time.

We're standing on the shore, and there's this vast ocean. And in the entirety of ourselves, we're all of that. The shore is not separate from the ocean, and it's just different. Different aspects of self, different ways of relating to the totality of our human experience.

And in this case, I'm on the shore, so I'm in my everyday life. I'm in my life of interacting with people, having some confusions, having different kinds of feeling states, having different kinds of desires and intentions and hopes and directions.

And I'm here on the shore, and I'm in touch with the vastness of my being. It's in front, it's laid out, it's vast and huge, and there's a sense of stepping into my moment, into my life, into the situation that I'm in, and showing up.

It's my intention to show up for my life.

And we can't show up for our life except by showing up for right now. I'm in this room and I'm functioning as a person leading something, and you're functioning as someone receiving something, and we're doing all this plus many other things at this moment.

But how do I show up here to manifest what I'm here to manifest? And the intention to do that, which includes everything—the concerns, the hopes, the excitements, the everything.

Now, it's important that it's not like, I'm here. We need to be a little cautious about that. It's softer.

It's just opening your arms. You might even feel what happens across your chest. There's this opening to the world, this kind of vulnerability, kind of wonder.

And then the coming back has this image, like the ocean. So as I come forward, the ocean's going away. I have received this water now. It's going away. I'm standing, and the ocean's building its energy again. Now it's going to come back toward me as I recede.

There's a feeling of lowering my head. There's some kind of humility, because I'm acknowledging I need the support of everything. This individual just can't do it. When he feels separate, he's lost. All of his history, all of his possibility of anxiety and concern and separation manifest.

So there's something in gesturing my gratitude, my intimacy with the totality, and my need—please help me, please don't let me have all of this. And then stepping back in.

And I'm here to show up for my moment.

So let's have this gesture, right foot forward. Once again.

Just take a moment to enjoy your hands against your chest. Feeling the ground.

Noble intention to step in.

Inhale, pausing.

Lowering your head, letting your chest come down a bit.

Inhale.

I think it takes a lot of courage to show up for our lives.

When sitting on the cushion, you know, sometimes—hope. Sometimes you have moments where it's just wonderful to be alive, and then there are moments where it's maybe the hardest thing in the world just to sit with ourselves.

And it really takes courage to show up when it's not wanted to be in any situation, but in this one, we don't have a lot of distraction. We don't go turn on the TV, we don't run to the refrigerator. You know, it's so bare in a certain way.

And it's really practicing how to show up with kindness.

The oceanic being

So, left foot forward.

Now we have the image that I'm resting in this larger space. We've turned the light around, to use that analogy. We're in this larger self. I'm the ocean now. I'm my oceanic being, which hopefully we're also growing in contact with.

And standing on the shore is the Russell, in whatever situations he's in. For you, whoever your one is.

And as the oceanic being, coming forward, this time with an exhale, sending this life force toward the one on the shore.

And sometimes I just do that and I imagine—sometimes I'll have Russell in a particularly challenging situation that he knows he's going to be encountering, and I'm reminding him that this source, this connectedness, this universal being is always there for him.

And to bring that into gesture, in my experience, brings that into much more than I believe. It brings that into your body. And to have that in your body is precious.

So, start here. Left foot forward.

And this time I pause longer, and feel free to breathe during the pause. You don't have to hold your breath at all. So you need some breath so you can exhale forward.

Feel the support of that left foot and your height as you're radiating.

Inhale, coming back, taking in anything that that being needs to give to you, or is ready to let go of.

Now we don't drop the head. We're fully welcoming. I like to say, he can pee in the ocean all he wants, it's not gonna hurt the ocean.

Pause for a moment. I want to do this a couple more times, but I want to show you the image we had.

Time and the timeless

So, again, very similar, connected to the earth. We have this sense that there's a radiance above, below, moving through us.

We still have the center that we're moving from, here. This center is a little larger, it's emphasized a little bit more, and there's this sense of this radiance. It moves out and in.

In other words, the horizontal dimension connects to everyday life. It's our interactions, it's our world of relationship, the world of time, of the past becoming the future through the present moment.

It is the realm of increasing span and range. It's not about depth as much as how much can be included in your caring. How much of this—of other beings, of this planet, of this universe—is included in your heart space. Much is welcome into that. So it's about range.

For human beings, this is the extension of compassion throughout the world.

So that vertical dimension has a different quality. It doesn't have this outness. It has this infinitely high and deep, timeless presence.

And this is the world of time, meeting situations, meeting everyday life. And in that pre-Christian and Christian, incredibly powerful image of a cross is this meeting of timelessness and time.

And that moment of meeting is the present moment. And that present moment is the portal through which we can enter deep being.

We don't sit. Present moment itself is still in time. It goes through the present moment. It's a portal. It's where we keep coming back, keep practicing.

How can I, with my infinite discursive thought, how can I have more and more repose, resting in presence? So I can come through this presence.

And it's so beautiful that often the cross crosses right through the heart. Sometimes it's through the center here, which is also beautiful, because we need this center. And then the other frequent representation of the cross is through the heart.

And that's very profound for humanity. Beyond our ideas about it—we can be comfortable with the historical ideas or not—but as an archetypical kind of image, it's something we can feel in our bodies.

So let's go a few more times.

Widening the care

This time, invite, as you exhale—rather than simply, or in addition to, having yourself on the shore—you can radiate as far and as wide towards the fires in Australia, towards the beings, the animals and humans who are being affected by that, towards, right at this moment, the elephants and rhinoceros in Africa that are being killed for their horns, the young girls in China who are being taken.

There are so many situations to be included in our range, in our caring.

Standing, left foot forward, and connecting in the vertical world.

We need that here-ness, otherwise we're gonna get blown out by how much need there is. We need a here, here on this spot. I need a center here, for it's just too overwhelming. Need a good ground connection to this space.

Enter this. Best wishes toward everything that's occurring, toward the possibility of peace and care throughout this planet and beyond the world.

Exhale, follow.

Just wait here and breathe. Feel the openness.

It's not that you're doing something. This is your being radiating, because it's connected to all. It's not a personal doing.

Inhaling.

I need to say that inhaling the sorrows of the world—those of you who know tonglen, this welcoming in of difficulties—is, if it feels not right for your body, I recommend doing something like this.

In other words, while we're bringing it back, in this case it's not towards our personal self. It's absorbing it into this ocean.

But if your permeability at this moment is such that, boy, you think of those fires, or you think of those women, or you think, and it goes—then it's not helpful right now. So then send it beyond your body.

Okay, so really, one is not better. It's a question of what's accurate for you at this moment. Is that clear?

[Silence 2 minutes]

Closing

So I appreciate—I do these gestures by myself most of the time, so I appreciate letting others do them.

If you believe—I don't mean you, collectively—one believes that you're transmitting an energy, and at the same time, you know, you're accepting the call.

[Participant:] Have you ever, or is it possible, to do it in a dyad and reverse it, so as you're giving out, the other person is coming in?

[Russell:] We'll be moving in that direction. You're already intuiting a few days down the road. Same wavelength.

Let's come closer.

Sitting, please.