Talk

Angela 2 — Week 3, Day 5, Session 4 — 94 minutes

Summary: Standing, the group asks for help and radiates warmheartedness. Sitting, they explore how felt sensing differs from feeling, and Russell keeps company with what comes. He then teaches the focusing attitude — pause, presence, and an unconditional welcome — and how to partner with what is alive, before they disperse to practice.

Standing

[Russell:] We'll start standing.

We're starting standing first.

And you can stagger a little bit, so you have space to open your arms.

Right foot forward, and just moving from center.

In my experience, it's wonderful to invite yourself, your body, your organism, into these — oh, we could say integrated embodied states, even when you don't feel like that.

And what I mean by that is, we can, without trying to impose something or push something away — often, especially as you do this work more, you'll find that the habit state has less magnetism. It's still there. It's just less magnetism. And it can be there, and you can be with it from a larger state.

So it's not a question of, am I there or there? It's like there's more space for you to have a stuck state, or a challenging feeling state, or whatever, and be able to, through embodying some of the qualities we're working on, actually be with it in another way.

And I used to have the idea that, well, to do that is to kind of push away something that needs to be there. And no. My experience is that's not true. It's including something that's there, from a larger space.

And it can — I mean, sometimes if it's a really strong state, then, you know, I'm not going to fight against it. But often it's very much like the researchers into facial expression, realizing that when they spent their day creating facial expressions of frowning, they were very sad. And they went home and they had lots of sad conversations. They didn't do anything during the day except change their facial expression.

And when they put on smiles — didn't matter how they felt — if they had a smile a significant amount of time during the day, their reported states were just generally happier.

And it's so interesting to see how what we think of as psychophysiology is also somatic psychology. It goes in both directions, right?

Let's just rest our hands on our chest.

We can literally invite the organs into life-giving states. That doesn't mean the old stories of, well, that's about repression or pushing. No, it's not. It doesn't have to.

And let's begin by opening out, stepping forward. As we come back, bringing the head into a situation, into our —

Yeah.

Asking for help, whatever ways we can.

I can't do it myself.

Please help.

You're showing up. Yes.

Please help.

Some people have something from their inner life, from their past, where they have an image of a being, or a system, or something that they are asking help from. I don't have that, but I did discover some years ago the power of asking.

And some people get confused. Well, if you're asking, who are you asking?

I don't know.

But there's something in asking that invites a responding. That is my experience.

And I can put words on it, you know — the universe, or life energy, or my higher self — but none of them really feel right to me, to tell you the truth.

But the asking feels really right, and the opening, and the recognition that I can't do it myself, and that larger forces can work together with me. All of that is something I can really feel in my body.

Left foot forward.

And this is the picture of being in that larger space. Like, it's turned around, and it's then out there. Or, from the image I like to use for this, we're the ocean. We're that larger sense of self.

And we're going to exhale forward. We're radiating our best wishes, our warmheartedness.

And you can stay here and feel the breathing. Inhaling, taking in.

Keep the head. Stay up. In.

Here for a moment.

You may find some expressions or images that come for you, and encourage you to let your inner life speak. I know one that came for me that was very important.

Such a touching, when this clear voice or sense came — with you all. Inner sense, even difficult moments.

This movement, this quality — those words may not be right for you. Quality, that unconditional radiance.

I said yesterday, we can include much more than our personal self. Include as far as we want to include in our caring. It can be specific, towards beings or situations. It can be general.

[Silence 38 seconds]

Can you imagine how recent it is, in the history of life, that this radiance — to go beyond yourself. Your family, your tribe, the people of your religion, people of your gender, people in your territory, maybe the animals in your territory, to include life itself.

For groups of people to do that is very — individuals did that, and the individual, the shamans sometimes, and the Buddhists. For groups, this is brand new on the planet, as far as I know. Brand new, meaning very, very recent.

Maybe there were pockets of people some hundreds of years ago, but that's very recent evolutionary time. Really, in terms of groups like this. Not just working in their own personal imagery, or their own tribal. You know, very, very few years groups of people are doing this.

This is a new step in the evolution of relationships.

Thrills me and draws me and gives me a lot of chills.

Let's come together here.

Felt sense and feeling

[Russell:] Let's close our eyes and settle.

Sensing the support underneath us, this connection to the earth, gives us enough stability that we can perhaps connect in a deeper way, in our inner sense, to feel.

If you open to the space inside — inside your chest, space inside your belly, and lower belly — spaciousness that's in there.

And once we have some physical space, we can contact the feeling body, as a resonance with anything we bring to it, as a felt sense about anything, if we give it some time.

And what I'd like to spend a little bit of time with right now is resonating differences that we sense. How it is, how it's different for us — this term felt sense, or what I like to call felt sensing, and feelings.

How are they? What comes about them that has some difference, some distinction, some ways that they are?

So it's not so much your concepts. Those will be included, but it's listening in your body to felt sensing, felt senses, feelings. How they are for you.

And when something comes, speak it out loud. I might interact with you a little bit.

And then we'll take in what anybody says, and bring it into our own felt sensing, and see if it resonates, if it doesn't. Does language connect?

[Silence 3 minutes]

Someone, begin describing some experience connected to these resonances.

[Participant 1:] I feel my feelings kind of above my shoulders. And then my felt senses below my shoulders.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 1:] I try to — if I'm trying to feel my felt sense, I'm trying not to bring superficial — I don't like superficial — but kind of feelings that are kind of above my shoulders, down. It gives space for me to find the felt sense. It's all working.

[Russell:] Yeah. So take all that that you just said in there, into your chest and belly.

Just get a felt sense about your description of felt sense. See anything that comes in this distinction that you're making. Yeah, just how that is.

[Participant 1:] Felt sense in the torso.

[Russell:] What — yeah, yes, go ahead.

[Participant 1:] Sense in the body. Right now there's a calmness I can feel in kind of my stomach area. And when you go below that, if it's not triggering, it's almost a sense that it's waiting.

[Russell:] Nice. So there's a calm sense of waiting in there.

And there's something — guessing — in felt sensing that has this, as you're listening for a felt sense, this calm sense of waiting.

[Participant 1:] Let it come when it wants to.

[Russell:] Right.

And the other part of that that I got from you was some sense that, if you go immediately to the feeling, which feels higher, that feels almost distracting for this calm sense of waiting, or what's under it, or what's living in there also.

Does that feel about right?

[Participant 1:] Right.

[Russell:] What comes from someone else?

[Participant 2:] Felt sense, like one of those museum exhibits, where you put your hands in and you don't know what's in there, and you're trying to feel and guess what it is by touching. But what I notice, as I compare, is that it's like — stay with the room.

There, it's like my antennae are out of my whole body, so I feel the back of my neck. The whole field of my body has antenna-like feelers.

Feelings is like — I have this awareness at the back of my head, and my eyes are gazing down with my eyes closed, and it's like I'm up here looking at something down there. And I don't know why. Does it really make sense? But since it's here, I'll share.

It feels like it's in a purse, and I know what's in there. You know what I mean? That you know what's in there?

[Russell:] Yes.

[Participant 2:] I have some idea of what's in there, in a purse that I'm looking at, or something.

[Russell:] Yeah. Yes, yes. So let's resonate that. See if that feels just right.

So there's a sense, with the felt sense, of the whole body having like antennae. It's a listening throughout the whole body.

With the feeling, it's like looking down into a purse in which you already know pretty much what's in there.

[Participant 2:] Yeah, right.

[Russell:] All right.

[Participant 2:] Yes.

[Participant 3:] Waiting. It was not calm as Bob spoke, because I was waiting — not to miss what people are saying, because I can't hear them. So I anticipate that.

And then my chest. It just got — when Aaron was speaking, it just became undeniable that my chest was, at first, I'm pushing back. I'm being pushed back, suppressing myself from expressing this need, for fear of being pretentious.

Need. Begging, of genuine wonder.

And yet, as Aaron spoke, I heard maybe ten words. And my chest really started throbbing. Like, let it out.

[Russell:] Right.

Keeping company

[Russell:] First, sense that whole felt sense of listening, wanting to hear, and the throbbing in the chest, tightening in the belly, the longing, that picture of pushing back, and more that wants to be known about all that, so that it feels really seen, fully.

All of this to be known.

[Participant 3:] I miss that line.

[Russell:] Yeah. Good, yes.

[Participant 3:] How much, how often, to express felt senses when they're no longer repressed. Where I'm expressing them, and taking the temperature to see how much — what clothes I should take on or off, as I go outside or back inside.

So, some tentativeness about simply expressing my needs.

[Russell:] Yeah.

Notice if it would be all right right now, Peter, to just be with the place in there that feels that need, that wanting, that uncertainty, and see if you can sense that in a bodily way right now.

[Participant 3:] Yeah.

[Russell:] That's it. Your ribs — I know you feel them. That's it. You're with them.

You're listening.

[Silence 40 seconds]

[Participant 3:] I feel a wave. Temperature rising in my chest, as if I do want to vent.

[Russell:] Are you sensing a place in there that wants to vent?

[Participant 3:] Yes.

[Russell:] So sense that. Sense what kind of contact it might like from you. Might it want that permission? Might it want a hand? What might it like from you?

[Participant 3:] Where? Cool air.

[Russell:] Let it know you hear it. It wants some cool air.

I think you can get a sense, by being right with it, of what might feel like cool air to it right now.

Let that place in your body speak to you.

[Silence 30 seconds]

[Russell:] Unhook from that fixation on hearing every word. Oh yeah, feel your hands. Do that gesture again, to unhook.

Yeah, unhook. Feel that energy, that moving back, that lifting, to unhook from needing to hear every word.

Feel what happens when you taste into that.

[Participant 3:] I can swim.

[Russell:] Oh, those gills become handy. You can swim a little bit.

[Participant 3:] Yeah.

[Russell:] Feel into that moment. And really let yourself have it, and sleep.

[Participant 3:] I don't have to lean forward on it.

[Russell:] So that's important. You don't have to lean forward on it. And come back a little bit.

[Participant 3:] Coolness on my face. There's coolness coming.

[Russell:] Yeah. Really enjoy that coolness on your face.

Just ask in there, as you're enjoying that — is there anything else that would like to be known about this not hearing, and the insight of, I don't need to hear every word? Anything else about that whole thing that might like to be acknowledged? Maybe, maybe not.

[Participant 3:] That I can choose to lean forward. That I can choose to lean back.

And how I'll navigate the other fishes remains to be heard.

[Russell:] Yeah. Thank you.

So just take a moment to let all that have a moment, integrate for you, and feel into your sitting here.

And if I might say, let the sounds come.

When you're ready, let the eyes open.

[Participant 3:] It's, see, because I feel the need to change the environment.

[Russell:] Right.

[Participant 3:] Not all the time. Some of the time, yes. Some of the time, no. But there's a forward and a back.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 3:] Thank you very much. It's very helpful.

What a moment includes

[Russell:] So, I'd like to just look at a few things together, and then get some practice spending time with something.

[Participant 4:] Yes. The first thought — such a feeling of compassion. I guess that's why I call it a sense. Sorrow.

[Participant 5:] Same thing here. Sorrow.

[Russell:] Yes. Now, is that a feeling? Is that a felt sense?

[Participant 4:] Okay, so I'll give you my — I don't know, right?

[Russell:] We're working together at something. These are not things that exist as, this is what it is, this is what it is.

What's more important is getting a sense of what happens when we move toward felt senses, and what happens when we move toward our feelings themselves, so to speak.

So I'm interested in the functioning.

And I'm going to move away from your example, and then we can come back to it if that feels helpful.

The richness of felt sensing has what I think of — and this is actually Feldenkrais's language, but when I have worked with this with Gene, he absolutely agrees with it, although it wasn't his exact language that he started with. It blends with his language. It crosses with his language.

An integrated experience, a whole experience, has in it always sensation, feeling, some kind of symbolizing — what Feldenkrais called thinking, but it's not just what we think of as ordinary thinking. It's sensing, feeling, thinking, and an environment.

For me, environment — another word we could use for that is a situation. That's more of a Gene word that I like a lot, a situation.

That in any moment of living, there is an integration of our senses, our feeling states, the tone, the feeling tone. There are actually different brain levels. Our symbology — what we know about it, what our expectations are, what our history is, what we're hoping for, what we're hoping won't happen. All of that is living in the moment. Parts of it are more emphasized than others.

And when a moment becomes more fixated, we tend to lose that integration, and fixate on a given part of that experience.

So feelings are an important part of felt senses, a very important part of felt senses. The problem is when they're in a purse, or when they're already formed as a separate something. They're not living as fluidly in the stream of our living moment, the stream of our experiencing.

So I think of the felt sensing as wider, as including. Now, this could be — the compassion could be experienced in a felt sensing way. I would say it depends on the environment, meaning your relationship, what's being called upon.

For me, I could also feel a sense, a moment of, oh — and yeah, I could feel that because Erin had this, that she felt bad about it for a moment. I could hear it in her tone. And so, I mean, there's so much living in the moment, right? And we're amazingly processing all this, and it's all going through.

And for this interacting, is to have the feeling of that as part of my experience. If that turns into, oh gee, oh, Pete, I'm so sorry — I may not function as fluidly in this situation as I might like to, when there's more connected.

Okay, so I want to — I'm doing two things here. I'm wanting to talk about felt senses and feelings, and layered upon that, I want to look at being with something that's alive in us, in a helpful way. That is sometimes called focusing.

Being with something that is alive in us, in a helpful way. I don't actually think of teaching focusing, for different reasons. I can tell you why at another time. But learning to be with what's alive in you in a helpful way, of which focusing has a lot of great clues on how to do that, is really important.

And the first important thing that we're looking at right now is this amazing discovery of felt sensing — that there is a holistic experience that is moving forward, and to get in touch with it almost always requires a pause.

The way Gene describes it — actually, I'm going to write some of this down here. I think we've been to some of this territory, but I think it's worth going over.

If you're turning, you can turn around, if you don't mind. Okay, so.

[Participant 6:] One thing I was going to ask you.

[Russell:] Go ahead.

[Participant 6:] About this. It seems like there's some kind of a little bit of a limitation with a feeling state. I mean, it can be big or not, but it's kind of defined there. And there's a sense of movement in a felt sense.

[Russell:] Correct. There's a quality of it. Yes. Very, very important part of that distinction.

And very often, when people have strong feelings, it may seem like there's a lot of movement. There might be a lot of yelling, a lot of crying, and there can be a catharsis.

What I've noticed, as someone who early on was trained to get people to cathart a lot — I was good at it. I could tell you some of those stories. But what I noticed was, sometimes it was helpful. It wasn't like a bad thing to do. I don't want to throw it out. There was a value, especially in a certain moment, someone's really pent up with something.

But what I noticed is, it generally did not create learning, or inner movement, where they would usually often return to the same condition after a certain amount of time. It wasn't a forward movement of the organism. It was an explosive quality that released some built-up energy or something, but it was not a shifting. Nothing was transformed. It was just relieved, and then repeated itself.

So feelings tend to be more narrow bands. If you think of a radio band, it's like a narrow band. And that's why that image that Aaron had was so lovely, that it's almost like they're already known.

And that's why when someone's, well, that's my sadness — what I know is that they're having an experience that I want to honor, but I know that if it's, oh, that's my sadness there, often, if we're going to be working together, it's so helpful to say, well, get a sense of how this sadness feels. Because every sadness is its own, even if it feels very familiar.

It's being lived in now, and it's only in the living in now — that's the situation, right? That's why we want to bring it to a situation. It's in the living in now that it can make a transformative movement. It can really step forward. It can move forward, right?

So when I notice myself, or someone, if they're wanting some guidance in something like this, using language that is traditional feeling language — one thing that's very helpful for people is, okay, especially if people have very familiar, my anger, that's, oh, that's my — okay, let's sense how this anger is. How do you know what's anger? What's the — oh, it's just that.

And what I want, as the felt sense comes, there's a combination of sensing — there are sensations. It's really key. This was, again, one of Gene's great discoveries, that our body is the location of our feelings. And in a way, he gets really funny. He goes, well, where else are you going to feel them? You're not going to feel them in somebody else's body. You're not going to feel them in your closet. Where are you going to feel them if they're not in your body? Which I love, the way he says that.

[Participant 7:] So, William James, huh? William James said that in the nineteenth century.

[Russell:] Oh, yes. Go on. One of my favorites.

[Participant 7:] One of my favorites.

[Russell:] So there's sensing, and then there's a feeling tone. Feeling, or I like to call it feeling tone. And again, here, if we were looking at it neurologically, there's a greater emphasis of other parts of the brain than when the sensations are dominant. Of course, these are all interacting. It's not like they're separate.

But it can be helpful to separate them, to understand that some — if you do focusing work with Feldenkrais people, one of the traps is they're so kinesthetic that they can go, oh, I'm feeling that in my right shoulder. And oh, it's moving to my clavicle. Oh, that's really interesting. I've got a kind of something in the clavicle that feels a little bit like it's a little tight, but wow, it's in my scapula. It's like the scapula is being pulled back and my ribs are being pulled down. And they'll go, and they'll spend fifteen, twenty minutes. And my hip's coming up, and it's like this whole pattern on my right side. And really.

And it's not — you know, maybe something valuable could come from it. There's always interesting things that happen. I'm not against any of them. I'm not saying there's one way. But that's not quite what we're talking about, right?

So, to get something like its feeling tone, its emotional quality. Okay, that scapula's being pulled up — is there any, without trying to figure out what it is, can you gently notice if there's any kind of feeling tone to it, as the scapula, as the clavicles? Well, just a little bit. Maybe a little bit protective. I'm feeling a little protective.

This just really changed, from my clavicles being pulled up and my scapulas, to, they're a little bit — let me feel if protective is the right word. So now I've got some sensation, and it's mixing in with some feeling, and then it might move into some kind of symbol, symbology, symbolizing something, where it might be like, I don't know, I feel like I'm kind of pulling away from —

And if we can follow it, if we can let it speak, and have the courage to let it come. But it's not like we're ignoring our feelings. Our feelings are important, or we're ignoring our thoughts. Everything is included, which is what I love so much — that we're not sitting up here going, well, that's not important, or that's not important. It's all included.

[Participant 8:] Yeah. Just to add something to the felt sense, as you're saying. In attending to that which is alive, it's more of a process. We have a feeling. Once you identify the feeling, it's not a felt sense. But if you stay with that feeling and say, oh, is there something more, or is there something underneath it? And whatever quality of the experience that leads you, or enables you to stay with being with something more, is the felt sense.

So the felt sense isn't, as you're saying, any one thing. It's that kind of place that takes you to the next clarity, the clarification of something else. And then when you have that, you go on, and that's no longer the felt sense.

[Russell:] Yes, yes, absolutely. Great.

And one of the things that Barbara is implying here that's so important, and hard to get in a way — but again, Aaron's example is good for it — is feelings tend to be already there. Felt senses are forming. And they form because you're inviting them, and you're giving interest, and that's part of the importance of that pause.

Because if you're just going along, going along, unless it's something rare in you, what you'll get is the already known feeling states. But with that pause and that dropping down — and you might begin with the feeling. It's like, that's a thread you can begin with. It might begin with an image. It might begin with a body gesture. These are all threads that can lead you to the holistic experience of all of that together.

Okay, I want to make sure we have that.

Situation, meaning it's not just our environment. It needs some specificity of the body to come alive. Yeah, so it needs — it takes a little bit of time, because it's forming. It's not already formed.

It takes an invitation, meaning a certain welcoming, welcoming atmosphere, interested atmosphere.

And what happened just now is, we are actually beginning to define a focusing attitude, of what allows felt senses to be known.

So I'll get there in one second, but I just want to thank you for this. So if we think of this — and I must say, for me, in terms of embodied life work, it'd be great for you to study focusing with other focusing teachers. There's so much to learn about focusing.

What's important to me is that you really get what a focusing attitude is towards your own experience, and that you're able to learn how to be with your felt sense. That's the ground.

And then you can go as far with it. You're not going to get a whole education in focusing here, because it's a big, big subject that I keep learning about. And, you know, it's like all the subjects we're doing. They're huge.

You know, you can do a Feldenkrais training, and you've got a good ground in it, but there's some — and the same with meditation. You can go on a three-year retreat. But it's not only a beginning. The integration of all of them together is a unique something that doesn't require, oh, I just have the beginning of that. You put them all together and something else occurs.

[Participant 9:] Does focusing add a feed?

[Russell:] So, I can't emphasize enough, pausing.

And what's so interesting — you know the story of me teaching focusing-like stuff before I met focusing. I told you that story. And then meeting Gene, and being shocked that this was out there, and getting much more. His development, in terms of philosophy and understanding, was light years beyond mine. But I had the basic ways I was leading people through, listening, and I was always talking about pausing.

And then I met Mary Jenlin, who has this, what she calls the radical pause, through an article that she wrote. And I look back through mine, and I've got the revolutionary pause. Oh no — she has the revolutionary pause, I have the radical pause. Isn't that funny?

And so I'm actually right now writing an article for the German Guild. They have a big — the German Feldenkrais Guild — where it's, would you write us an article? We had one of our board members go to yours, and there's something about the pausing, and the meditation, and the Feldenkrais. Could you write an article about that? We're going to do an issue about pausing.

So I'm in the midst of that right now. So that's very funny.

Okay, so pausing. That it needs — when you're jumping really quickly, most probably you're going with what's already known. And the old news can be interesting, but if it's not hot off the press, it's unlikely to make an internal shift, a felt shift.

Okay, you might need to go through some old stuff in order to feel current enough to pause. You might need to say some of what's going on in you.

I don't know what they're doing. I just know what they asked me to do. We'll see when I give them my first draft what they say. I have no idea if I'm giving them what they want.

Oh, let me give one more thing, and then — that I missed, around the felt sensing, and it's important that we know this. They usually don't come clear and bright. They're usually fuzzy. They take time to be with them.

And often, if we're kind of impatient, we'll often take something old and put it on it. You know, it's like, oh, there's something going on in there, and I just might urge to know it, that I may be very familiar with a feeling of my old anxiety. Oh, that's my anxiety. Whereas it's right next door to it. So we want to give it enough time.

[Participant 10:] But you totally implied it. But in focusing, always, while being present — so not being merged in.

[Russell:] Right.

[Participant 10:] But yeah.

[Russell:] That's exactly the next place we're going.

So, what I like to call presencing. Presencing, and the subset of that — I'm hoping people remember — presence language.

Does anybody remember us working with that? Does anybody not know what I mean by presence language? It's okay if you don't.

It's a sense of, there's something in here, or I'm sensing something is in here. It's the sense that there's an I that's with something. So I'm not in it. I'm here.

And I can't emphasize enough the importance of that.

Another article that I just finished, that you'll get very soon, because it's actually going to be part of our next conference call, so I'm sending it out in a couple of days, is looking at this. What I'm writing about is, I'm differentiating traditional mindfulness practice from the kind of sitting that I'm working with here. But I'm also saying how it's not that it's not mindful.

Mindfulness is incredibly important, that groups of human beings are learning to be able to observe their own minds and their own experience, that they're able to notice. Again, this is new behavior for groups of people, because all of a sudden we can question our own thinking. And so much of the violence and prejudice on our planet is, we can't stand next to and look back at.

So this presencing is a very, very key part of a focusing attitude.

What else is important to you in a focusing attitude, when you go in there?

[Participant 11:] Well, all the stuff you've been talking about, about seeing yourself with compassion, about the body. That's still the body's.

[Russell:] Absolutely. So you can say that, in my way of thinking, part of the definition of presencing is this unconditional warm-hearted.

And we could say unconditional warm-hearted, and then I'm going to add another word that is key for the whole focusing attitude. Unconditional warm-hearted welcoming.

Now, this attitude of welcoming is so rare for people with the things they don't like, right? But so much of what we're working with is developing that larger sense of self, so it's not so scary to acknowledge that particular troubling state inside, because it doesn't feel like it's who we are. It feels like one of the many places in there.

And we can actually have an attitude of, oh, you're here. The place inside that Peter was sensing there.

And notice what we did. When we were — can I comment, Peter? Notice what we did was clear, classic, for everybody. Not new for anybody here. I just want to define it.

Let's welcome what's here. Let's sense it in a bodily way. This was another unique contribution. Sense it in a bodily way.

So, now that's challenging for a lot of us. We go in there, we go, well, what does that mean?

And what I want to encourage you is that you're very generous with yourself, because anything that feels even a little bit true is good.

So let's say you're feeling — actually, when, can I comment, Bob, on your comment?

[Participant 1:] Sure, absolutely.

[Russell:] Okay. So, when Bob first spoke, he was talking about the felt sense and about the feeling. He wasn't quite with it. It was an about. But when you went into your belly and felt that calm place, it was alive. There was a movement there.

Now, we won't always — not everybody can feel things here, there, there. It might be an overall sense of dark. Well, is that a bodily sense? It could be. It feels kind of — and I look for the gestures.

Or often people who are real kinesthetic, or real natural focusers, go, yeah, I feel that in my lower belly, and it's this tightness. And if you've got that, follow it.

But even if it's much more vague, like, I don't know. And then, well, kind of, it's just, there's something there. I don't even know what to call it. You're in touch with it. This is okay. Because there's something there that you don't know what to call, but you're not going there. You're going, there's something there. So you're in touch with something, and that will lead you. That will lead you.

It's actually as good if you don't know what to call it. You don't know what it is, and you don't know what to call it. That means that's a felt sense. Yeah, that's good. I don't know I want to call it better. I want to call it as good. But I'm with you, okay?

Okay, so, what else helps you stay with your focusing processes? What other attitudes help you?

Sarah.

[Participant 12:] I think one of the things that I found really helpful is that we have to accept that something might not come.

[Russell:] Yeah. And it might not be ready to be known, right? So can we call that, there's no pressure?

That was, like, working ten minutes ago.

So, you know, say what's in there, and say, well, right now I'm uncomfortable. And I'm feeling like, well, if you really have focusing, you can find something.

Thank you for bringing that.

Let me tell you a pet peeve of mine, and I'm surprised if I haven't spoken about it here, but I'll say it a bunch more times.

Just as I'm so disheartened that the Feldenkrais world is being taken over by physical therapy, that it's becoming known as a good physical therapy. It's for dealing with problems.

Whereas for me — I probably told you this analogy. Mozart. Do you remember the Mozart analogy? Anybody remember that?

Imagine that you love Mozart. You think Mozart touches your soul, elevates your spirit. You feel in touch with the highest and the deepest, listening to Mozart. And then they discover Mozart is a

good therapy for anxiety. It helps people relax. And then ten, fifteen, twenty years later, you find the purpose of Mozart is to help people relax. And you go, no, no, you're missing it. It's great that people can relax with it, but don't limit it to that.

I have that with Feldenkrais. I have that with focusing.

[Participant 13:] It's the same thing with mindfulness, too.

[Russell:] So, let me stay with focusing. So, in the focusing world — and this is actually, I'm not the only one who is concerned about this — it's so good in therapy that a lot of people approach focusing as, I only focus to solve things.

Whereas for me, focusing — oh, I don't even want to say focusing. I want to say this attitude, this way of being with what's alive in you. What happens is, if you're with something that's life-giving, it gets bigger. If you're with something that's stuck, or not life-enhancing, it tends to find resolution. It tends to move forward. It tends to shift.

So it's like the best of — it's like the organism knows what to do with it.

So when you take, like, some of the resource work that we do — although I was doing it before I knew focusing, it takes a focusing attitude. And it's not focusing. It's other. That's why when people say, well, the embodied life is meditation, Feldenkrais, and focusing, I'm not quite. It's really guided inquiry, of which focusing is a part.

Because this whole resource work is, we're watering these life-giving seeds. The work we did before lunch. For some people, that really touched this place. That's a lot that's in there, waiting to be invited forward. It's not that we're making it up. It's waiting to be invited. And when we invite it, it gets bigger, because it's life-giving.

So theoretically, if we'd had more time — it said, you could have spent more time with me, so I could learn what it would be like to be calm and relaxed. This isn't necessarily an actual state, but it's something I really need to develop.

Right, and the calm and relaxed could have opened into some place, and you might have had a memory of being a kid floating in a pond, and you go, oh, there's a lot more of this in me. It could have gone.

What I want to say is, you don't have to look for problems. Take what comes, and it's wonderful.

In fact, if I was somehow directing people's lives, I would say, go for two or three life-giving experiences for every one that you're going to work on that feels like a stuck place, or a difficult place, or something like that. Grow that. That is how our immune system grows. That is how we know now that our brain can cultivate these new states, with actually — this is new research — rather little practice.

Everybody knew that if you meditate for thirty years and you go into retreats and all, the early brain studies — yeah, these people have these incredible left frontal lobes, and they are happy people, and it's no problem showing that neurologically.

The newer stuff is eight minutes a day. A certain line of research from Richie Davidson. Eight minutes a day, growing compassion meditation, you can watch the changes in the brain. And then looking at psychological study of happiness, and then actually some interesting studies in

behavioral things. You know, do you tend to help people? They'll have a confederate who needs help after, and your actual responses to people change.

What we need are consistent kinds of practices. Not that long. Our brains are amazing.

Okay, so what I want to do is just pause there, to make sure — because I realize I'm giving too much at once.

So the point there is that cultivating a focusing attitude is a way of being with what's alive. To do that requires a pause. Requires a sensing into the totality of yourself, which I recommend begin with your body, in here, where felt senses are most easily accessed. Let the images come. Let whatever comes, come, and keep coming back here. Words, pictures come, bring them in here. Let it guide you.

And that will be really ninety percent of what you need. The rest is working it out, getting it more refined. But that will take you quite far.

[Participant 14:] No, my question was — and I mean, I'm just a novice at the whole thing, but my own personal experience is, even if I started with an issue, it was always life-giving. The work always was life-giving. And maybe that's just my personal experience. I didn't expect it. It was always a surprise. There was a surprise quality to, oh my God, how did we get here? And it was so much more informing than that specific issue. So much bigger than what that would be. So that's my own experience. I'm just in awe of the process. I don't get it.

[Russell:] Yeah. Okay. Well, I'm with you. That's beautiful. And thank you for bringing that.

It's, when I say, you know, when I'm differentiating working with difficulties, or working — I'm not meaning to imply it isn't very life-giving to work on some issue, and that it really will tend to open when you stay with a focusing attitude. Will tend to move along and open up, often with, oh my gosh. And I love that surprise.

[Participant 15:] It seems to be important, meaning, when I'm focusing, to be open to what comes. Sometimes things will come and I'll have a thought like, well, what the heck does that have to do with anything? And I want to disregard things sometimes, because they don't make sense. But if I don't do that, and I just follow it, whatever it is, or how bizarre it seems to me, then I have a —

[Russell:] Beautiful. Beautiful, thank you.

Okay, so, yes, Bruno.

[Participant 16:] My question is, rather, what triggers guided inquiry? When, how often? I would say I sit every day in the morning. I don't focus every day in the morning.

[Russell:] Okay, let's hold the question. I don't want to do it right now, about guided inquiry and the use of that, okay?

What I would say is, a focusing attitude can become your way of living. Not that you always can take the time to pause and go with your felt sense, but the sense that pausing is a frequent experience. The inner listening. Not ignoring what's — oh, there's something going on. Okay, let me be with that. Not trying to figure it out. Let me be with it. Let me keep company with what's alive in me.

Let me listen to my own gestures, my own movements, my own pictures that come.

It's amazing to me how generous, when we welcome what's living in us. It's not hiding. There's a generosity, that we get more than we expected, when you see it like that.

Okay, that's enough. Enough for now. I'm stuck right now.

With a partner

[Russell:] Let's get some practice, some more practice, because then we can take live questions from your friends.

Is anybody feeling like, I haven't done any of this, I don't really have any idea how to start with the kinds of attention that we're working with? Is anybody feeling — I'm not asking do you feel well-versed. I'm asking, do you feel really lost, in terms of sitting with yourself, or sitting with another? And I'll tell you what the partner's going to do in a moment.

[Participant 17:] I have a question. When we were working last night, it's more so about how to start, and more so about how to draw to the —

[Russell:] Oh, good, good, thank you.

So, the beginning of your work, a person can bring themselves in, or if they would like, they could ask their partner to lead them in.

And the leading in has this quality of, in my style, which really emphasizes this physical body a little more than most, but it's certainly not — I don't think anybody would object to it. I'll tell you later on, if you want to know why I think it's so important, but to drop really into the groundedness. Bring the feeling in here.

And then if you have something that you want to learn about, you can bring that subject into your inner life. It can be something that's challenging for you right now. It can be something that you're — you know, I'm really enjoying my relationship with my daughter. Let me know. It could be a lot. It could be anything that you would like to learn about. Like you have a Ouija board in here.

So we go. And sometimes — so the guiding in. Physical body. Take your time. Let your voice help people to slow down.

And invite the person, when they're ready, to speak out loud about what they're sensing, what they're in touch with.

As you get towards the end of the session, give them a two or three minute warning, depending on what they would like. If they want more, you can do that.

And then as you get to the end, it's a similar kind of — the first thing, in psychology, is an induction. You're actually going through a different state of consciousness. You're inducing a sitting state. And at the end, we need to come out smoothly, or it's too jarring.

So what I recommend is, as you've given them the warning, and then as they're feeling complete, you can invite them to sense how it feels in their body now, whatever they've — how it is in there — and to acknowledge and appreciate what's shifted in them. That's a wonderful thing, to sense what's in there and acknowledge what's shifted.

Second thing is, I like to offer a moment of gratitude, of thanks, that this is alive in us and that we can contact it. I think it's a miracle. I don't take that for granted.

So I like to acknowledge the shift. I like to thank it, thank my inner life. If there's something that I'm in process about that's going to want more time, I let it know that I'll come back.

[Participant 18:] So, you're talking about a person who's really focusing right now, not necessarily the partner.

[Russell:] Well, in a sense, all the instructions that a partner gives are the instructions that you would give yourself if you were focusing alone.

[Participant 18:] Yeah. I guess I'm thinking —

[Russell:] Let me just finish this. So all focusing is self-focusing, in that way.

Now, if the agreement between you and your partner is they'd like you to lead them out, then you will say these. Maybe just take a moment to sense how that is inside you right now. What's shifted from before. Just acknowledge what's changed, and enjoy that.

And maybe take a moment. Thank your inner life, that all this is alive. And if something would like some more attention, that you'll come back.

And now, just sense that you're sitting here in a chair. You're in this room. You can hear my voice. Feel your weight. You sense your feet. And when you feel ready, open your eyes.

So you get how that's the reverse of the start, the transition out. Is that good?

[Participant 17:] Good.

[Russell:] Okay, so. And of course, the tonality — you practice, you learn, it will feel natural over time.

So, yeah, let's just get some practice, spending time. Let's say, after — oh, let's call them twenty-five-minute sessions. Twenty-five minutes, that includes the leading in and leading out, and take a couple of minutes in between, and then switch over.

Okay, so we'll just finish around there.

[Participant 19:] So, this whole clarity is very easy for me, and I'm used to sort of leading myself in and leading myself out, and my partner being just mostly silent. I'm comfortable with that. I'm a little more uncomfortable with doing the, you know, reflecting back, or doing all that. I mean, is that more comfortable for you?

[Russell:] Yes, yes, thank you. Thank you.

Let me — you see, I know that you've all worked so — some of you have worked a lot, some of you maybe not at all. Let's say this.

The person who is focusing, if you would like silence — but the first level of focusing, the first level of partnering, is presencing. You're just — and oh, I don't like to say just. You are present with the other. Just is such a minimizer, and what else could be more beautiful? You're presencing.

The second level is reflecting. And you've all done that. Give some of the words back, but not just the words. And I'll tell you why tomorrow. You don't just say, tight in your chest. So you're sensing some tightness, or something that's tight in your chest.

Now, if you are someone's partner and you don't feel ready to reflect, let them know that. You know, I need a little bit more instruction on how to do that. Not quite. If you're someone who's been doing this, and your partner would like you to reflect, then you're welcome to do that.

Okay, so you would stay with sentences like, so you're noticing, or so you're sensing, something like, or just whatever it is.

The next level, what I like to call reminding. The initial reminders are things like, maybe pause and sense how all that is right now. Okay? Because we get caught up in our process, and we know that pausing's important. So, as the partner, I like to cushion it with a maybe. I don't want to be demanding. Maybe pause.

The second major reminder is, maybe, or if it feels right, sense how all that is in your body right now.

Because we all know some of us have habits of, we can get lost in our thoughts quite a bit, quite a long time, in the story about things. Nothing's going to change there. Not, I mean, nothing, but it's not the focusing work that we're learning.

So you might like your partner, you might empower your partner, to give you some reminders, to invite you to pause if it seems like you're losing it. And you can always ignore them. You can say, no, no, no, I'm really in touch. It's okay.

You can invite your partner to remind you if you'd like, or if you're the partner and you don't feel quite ready to do that, let your partner know. Okay?

[Participant 20:] And please. Would you, could you remind me to say hello, too?

[Russell:] Yeah, yeah. That's good.

So, hopefully, when you are going inside, one of the first parts — and actually we should have written this under the focusing attitude — is acknowledging, or saying hello to. Meaning, something's there. We want to let it know that we know it's there. You heard me with Peter.

Maybe say hello to that place, and then — so, yeah, a good reminder can also be if the person has not really acknowledged, or said hello to, what's in them. They can say hello.

Okay. Let's do that. Find a partner.

And the one who's focusing — actually, I don't even want to say the one who's focusing. The one who's keeping company with something that's alive in you, also known as focusing.

The one who's keeping company with something alive, and you've let your partner know what you want, and the partner keeps time. If you need a watch, let me know.

It's twenty-five minutes from the beginning of the lead-in to the end of the lead-out. So it's about twenty minutes that you're really in the session. Okay?

And then you're going to switch over, because we're going to go to dinner. And it's almost twenty minutes of, twenty-two of. So we'll go straight to dinner. We're going to go straight to dinner.

And I will be wandering around. If you're needing something, you can ask me. So you can disperse.

And we'll meet at dinner, and then we'll come back after dinner, and —

Yes. Yes, that's the point.

[Participant 21:] Is it the point that it's a little —