Talk

Angela 2 — Week 3, Day 5, Session 5 — 16 minutes

Summary: Russell recalls a Feldenkrais training in Brig where the group worked blindfolded, and tells of Bruno, a blind student who loved speed and died on a mountain pass doing what he loved. He then sets up a group practice on "turning the light around," sensed in the body rather than discussed, before a walk and a sitting.

A story about Bruno

[Russell:] So this work with blindfolds got my deep interest in, I believe it was 1989, when I was an educational director of a Feldenkrais training in Brig, Switzerland.

And yeah, so that's — wow, so that's a while ago. Twenty-four years ago. Old?

So it was a fascinating training. Eighty people, large group, and two of the men in the group were blind.

You know, most people who are blind are not 100% blind. They were not just about blind. They were really blind, but they could have shadow and light. And one of them, Bruno, the young man, could, if he turned his head this way, decipher if there was — through shadow — if there was something over here. He couldn't tell what it was, but he could basically tell the shape.

The other man — blanking. Oh my gosh. I've got a space. Doesn't matter to you, I just need a minute, cause I need —

Rudy. Rudy, who came to the training with his wonderful dog every day. And when his dog died, it was so painful, but then he got his second. I knew both his dogs. I knew Rudy for about twenty years, and I haven't seen him in the last few years.

So Rudy was actually a massage therapist in Switzerland, and a cello player.

But this is a story about Bruno. Although I mentioned Rudy because he got me into exploring with the whole group what it would be like not to see. And we actually wore the blindfolds for four hours.

And I had only my assistant trainers — about four or five assistant trainers — and myself, the only people not blindfolded. So we had to take people to the bathrooms, but the rest of the group was blindfolded for four hours.

It's a fascinating experiment.

So Bruno was this young guy who, although he couldn't see, loved wild colors, and would always wear — you know, he might have a purple sock and an orange sock, and nothing went with

anything. But he was, I think, twenty-one. Always had his mother buy him wild colors. He loved the way they feel.

He didn't like dull colors. He didn't like the feeling of dull colors.

[Student:] After reading Lusseyran, did you read the Lusseyran book? Bruno?

[Russell:] Sorry, you can get it in French, you know.

Okay. Okay.

So he — fascinating young guy, great laugh, and what Bruno loved to do more than anything was ride a bicycle. And he rode a bicycle like this. Because he could get —

And he would go around, and when he would see something: "Be careful, I'm blind. Be careful." And he would go through the streets of Brig.

"Be careful" — and it was like the people in Brig would come to the training sometimes. They'd go, "This crazy guy, Bruno." He became like an icon in the town.

Well, one day Bruno is going down and there's an object. It's not a car, and it's smaller, and it's down there, and he can't tell, and it's very small, and he can barely see it, and then —

And he's on the ground. And he knocks this guy over, and the guy says, "How could you run into me? I'm in a wheelchair!"

And Bruno says, "I couldn't see you, I'm blind!"

And that guy ended up becoming a real friend of the training. How could you run into me, huh?

So Bruno loved speed. And what he would do is go — we were on the Domodossola Pass. The Domodossola Pass is the pass that goes from the Wallis part of Switzerland over into Italy. And it's quite a steep pass.

And Linda and I used to love to go there every weekend, just to hear Italian. Because the accent in the Wallis is a very harsh Germanic. And we'd go over there and we would breathe differently. So we got hooked on gorgonzola and listening to Italian.

We literally would go there with little Lily. We'd go there and we'd spend the day in the town, just —

Okay, time to go back.

So there's this wonderful long pass — a lot of truckers coming over — where Bruno could, you know, he'd sometimes go at night. Because there'd be less cars, and he could make things out. And he could actually see better at night, because he could see the light would flash, and he would go. He loved it.

And Bruno met his end on the Domodossola Pass. A few years later he actually went back, after the training was over, because he loved that particular pass so much. Last time he went, a truck, and he met —

But he died doing what he loved the most in life.

Amazing.

Bruno, Bruno, Bruno.

Yeah, touches my heart, yeah.

How it's alive

[Russell:] Yeah, so I want to do a practice similar to last night, and I don't really want to talk about last night's practice except if there is confusion in questions.

Last night we were practicing in groups, and we each had a color, and we were mostly just sitting, and then we'd ring the bell and I'd give a color, and the person could say something — didn't have to — could speak a lot, could speak almost none, or none, about how it's alive.

And I'm wondering if you could follow that, if you could work with that in a meaningful way, or if it left you in some —

[Student:] I have no idea what he's looking for.

[Russell:] Huh?

[Student:] I have no idea what he's looking for.

[Russell:] Okay, so — what did you do?

[Student:] Well, I went to work with alive, and my breath was incredibly at ease, and my ribs were —

There was a — what was — oh wait, I went to imagery and it was like an accordion playing.

And so that was easy, but the part that it didn't — and because it's new, possibly it didn't enhance my meditation.

[Russell:] Okay, good. Okay. Yeah, so you were on the right wavelength of listening.

How is it alive, sitting here?

And we can experiment with, is there a way of speaking from where it's alive that enhances the alive? And maybe not.

And the most important thing is that we're listening to how it's alive.

Turning the light around

[Russell:] Tonight, we're gonna do a similar practice with a different sentence, or different words. And again, the most important thing is that you're using the words in your experience. It's feeling how this comes alive. Not theoretical, not what does it mean? Well, maybe it means this. It's — can I sense something around this?

And at other times, you can just be with your breath, go back to the aliveness — that's always a good place — and then you can return to the sentence I'm gonna give you. And see, what do I do internally to have an experience of these words, that these words come alive in my embodied experience, and then let it go, come back to the alive.

And the new words are turning the light around. Turning the light around.

Again, it's not a discussion of it, not theoretical, but if you're sitting there, you begin with it's alive, you begin with just breathing, regular meditation, and then when the bell rings, one person will begin exploring turning the light around, and the other people begin the exploration of turning the light around, but you're listening to one.

They may not say anything. They may say one thing. But you're all investigating, what the hell is turning the light around in this moment? How is it alive in me? Is it alive? How do I keep it from becoming just thinking?

And then I'll ring the bell, and you go back to just being alive with your breath. And then I'll ring the bell, give another color. Someone else will speak or not speak, but it's their turn.

And it's only during the time when the person is being invited to speak that you're actually focusing on this turning the light around. What comes in my experience? What happens to me? How do I do that? What goes on?

Then when I ring the bell, and it's an in-between time, you're just back to meditation.

Is that clear?

[Student:] Does the color during the speaking period begin with those words? Is that what you're saying?

[Russell:] No, you don't have to. Yeah, that's right. No, you don't have to say those exact words. You might, but you are seeing —

Okay, so if I'm here —

Illumination.

Light from without.

Pulsing in the body.

Large space.

Bigger.

And bigger.

When I started — when he asked me — I believe the confusion I had was that I thought that as a speaker, I was supposed to actually say those words out. I'm actually answering that question. I'm actually investigating the question for myself and sharing.

What I was doing was as if my color was just called, and I was speaking from the experience of turning the light around.

Okay?

A walk first

[Russell:] Okay, now we've been sitting for a while. What I'd like to do is set up for meditation, do a walking first, and then we'll sit. We're gonna do one sitting tonight in our group, and then we'll do a very short practice all together.

But I wanna start with a walk, cause we've been sitting a long time.