Discussion

Angela 2 — Week 3, Day 6, Session 3 — 50 minutes

Summary: Russell invites the group to share from the gesture, meditation, and movement work, practicing listening and speaking. People speak of aliveness, staying present with another without losing oneself, the ground of I am here, eye contact and safety, the difference between needs and neediness, and the trust to spread one's wings while being held.

Invitation

[Russell:] So I'd like to remind us about volume, and intention toward projecting across the room when possible. We'll remind each other.

And so just maybe close your eyes for a moment and just feel the influence of those gestures. The gestures themselves, for many of us, have a great power. And then connecting those gestures to another. First going in sequence with each other, doing the same thing at the same time. And then once we got through some confusion, going through the call — call an opposite, or a complementary gesture. And then discussing what stood out.

That great human challenge of being authentic with the self when in connection with another, that we all deal with. Connecting to a future situation.

There's all that, and I also would like to invite — once we've got the data a little bit — is there anything? We've done some really, I think, new steps in our meditation practice. This morning there was a strong quality in the room, and last night, maybe for some people it was really confusing. Maybe it was helpful to be in the small groups, and the sense of turning the light around.

So we've got a lot that's up. I don't want at this point to look at the focusing work. We'll do that after lunch. But right now, anything that wants to come, in terms of the practice we just did. The meditation work. Could even be from the movement work.

And I encourage a kind of practicing of what I called last time, listening speaking, which is permission to pause, to sense, and find the right words. To hear oneself, and the influence of one's own words on one's own experience.

And I invite anyone to share something. And maybe some of those who are more reticent about speaking, if it would feel right, encourage yourself to experiment with bringing your voice forward.

Yeah. So, just another moment of seeing, from all that, from all we're working with, outside of that focusing practice, all the other things — what might like some sharing, or questioning, or offering?

And when you feel ready, we can offer something.

Please, Felicity. And Felicity, happy birthday!

A skin bag of fireflies

[Participant 1:] Yes, I do. I do want to say something. And Russell, I was going to say one-on-one, but if I may, bring this to the group.

This particular session, I had this image, I guess, this sort of container of fireflies. And love spirals. Just a lot of physical things, but I could never get the container right. I mean, when I was a child, I'd catch them in jars. And anyway, jar didn't seem right for me, so I had to see. Well, here it is. It's a skin bag.

[Russell:] Thank you.

[Participant 1:] A skin bag of firefly.

Aliveness

[Participant 2:] Sharing an image that Aaron pointed out. And at first it was kind of like a joke, and I realized how powerful. She was saying, you have your own version of the Midas touch, where you point to something like, oh, the elephant, it's alive. Like, oh, the sun, it's alive. The inner states. And how much of the continuity of the aspects of this is about recognizing the aliveness that's there in so many things that we think of as dead or stuck or inert, whether it's air, or in our life experiences, or sun or earth. Sorry, I'll point out some more as we go.

That has really been present for me. How does aliveness really show up in experience?

[Russell:] Yes. Beautiful. It's alive!

Did you ever see that? Yeah, when I was a little kid, there was the Central Movie Theater. We lived on Long Island for a while. And there was the Central, and 35 cents on Saturdays. Could ride your bike up to the Central Theater. Didn't even have to lock him, just left him outside. Went in the Central Theater, and there was a horror movie. I don't even remember which one it was. It really scared me, and the key line in it was, It's alive!

Somehow that became central to my understanding.

Turning the light around

[Participant 3:] How the light gets turned around. And so Bruno was in our group, and I got a reflection of his light, more than my own. And I just was like, I think I was trying to learn. And so when he was offering his, I could receive it. And he had part of the light going behind him. It just went right through and around, and I'm like, why have I contained it? It's way bigger.

Anyway, that was a very helpful experience, to just receive that.

[Russell:] Yeah. Oh, beautiful.

[Participant 3:] Yeah, thank you.

[Russell:] Yes, please.

Here and with

[Participant 4:] More, and then — an initial feeling of being present with someone, offering your authentic self, and including them in their presence.

I realized that when I listen to someone, which I've always considered a skill that was positive, and I'm rethinking that — of just being completely present with them and what they're saying, and immersion in that, without this grounding that holds me in my own self. And I've always thought, oh, that I am so good at that. I can do that so well. And I'm thinking, wow, that maybe I need to rethink that. That actually, it was really hard to be here and with.

I could be with very easily, but being here and with was challenging.

[Russell:] Oh, boy. Yeah.

This is so essential, from your first comments about coming over the boundary. It's another part of the same learning. And so connected to the boundary.

[Participant 4:] Exactly.

[Russell:] And many of the — I don't want to specify, but some of what you and I were speaking about. This has to do with boundary, and when you can be in the presence of the other, and this is here.

First it's a practice. Yeah, you feel — you gotta feel it. Feel that you can have yourself on that seat, and these words are there, and know it's challenging, and there are beings around. And what happens?

[Participant 4:] Just an awareness. I can't really define it. Just something that I know needs to — need some time. Process. You know, to sort of — I don't even know. It's so new that I don't even know what it is.

[Russell:] Yeah, yeah. Oh, that's precious.

[Participant 4:] But I feel it. I can feel it. It's not sweat. There's some permeability.

[Russell:] Yeah, yeah.

[Participant 4:] But it's safe. Safe, like — it helps me see who I am, because part of what this transition has been is that I kind of lost who I was. I was so solid in who I was, and then all of a sudden it wasn't there anymore, and I didn't really know what was there instead.

And this kind of feels like, I'm here instead. It sort of feels like that. Oh, there isn't nothing in between me and there. There's this permeable boundary of that safe — there's safety there. Sort of gives me a place to say I'm alive here. And that goes through this boundless.

[Russell:] Right.

As we continue, give that the time it needs. Precious what's coming from your life.

Joy and delight

[Participant 5:] Somehow this time, for me, there's a sense of ease coming, and even in the meditation. And when I thought of that, I also thought back to when I met you. No, it wasn't the first time I met you. When I worked with you in Salt Lake. And I remember you saying something about, when something was off, it was just a hair's breadth off.

And somehow that, to me, at this moment — I don't have to work so hard at it. It might just be being with, and there's something new. It's a little hard for me to bring the words. But the words that are there for me are joy and delight.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 5:] Thank you.

Speaking in the group

[Participant 6:] Just an open forum for me just to speak. I don't have anything particular to say. It's just the courage just to speak right now.

[Russell:] Is there anything you'd like? Is there anything you would like?

[Participant 6:] Just, I think now I know more of a sense of eye contact, and with people in a bigger group. I'm pretty champion with one-on-one. I've gotten that down pretty good. But in a big group, I get lost.

And that's something that I'm on the edge with, and I welcome it. And I'm open to it, because I feel safe here. I'm fine with my practice and our friends. That's easy for me. In a forum like this, with not hearing so great, I get lost in the self. I'm sure it's not always about my ears either.

It's more of just being heard, and allowing myself to hear myself.

[Russell:] Yeah.

I am here

[Russell:] And I put something out there, and it connects also — Laurie was talking about this — and actually for all of us, I suspect.

I can't emphasize enough how much the I am here on this spot. That one could be there, feeling the weight and the wall and the hands and the feet, that infrastructure of our experiencing. Before how I am, I am here. I am here.

And it's so — in a way, obvious. It's so easy to overlook.

And it's so simple, so direct, but our mind can get to poo-pooing it, or bored with it, very quickly.

Like, to practice speaking from one's bottom. What does that mean? It means, at first, there is some intention to find words while I feel some contact. And then it gets spontaneous. It's not like I'm sitting here, you know, I gotta put some attention down. It becomes — your words take on a greater presence, because they're coming from more of you. And that is actually grounded in our physicality.

And I have permission from Gene to say this. This is one of the things that's new and important for him in our relationship. He is so brilliant at felt sensing that he skips over his physical body. He goes to his feeling body very well, that part of his physical body, how it is in here, but just to feel the bottom on his seat and feet on the floor. And as soon as — usually I will guide him there — there's a joy waiting for him. But when he skips that, there's a lot of sorrow over difficult places that he needs to go through.

And I asked him, could I say this? And he said yes. So what I'm pointing toward is the emphasis that I'm placing on just, I'm here on this spot. That fundamental grounded sense of self. It's not completely accurate to say before how I am, but it's good enough. It's good to think of it that way for a while. It's not like how I am is waiting for me.

But I can't emphasize enough how much value we can get, in terms of our boundaries, in terms of connection to self and other at the same time, if we can practice that.

We can more and more often feel very safe, connected to self and world, and it becomes spontaneous, so it doesn't stay effortful, but it's worthy of intention. Even in more anonymous situations. You're at the store, to play with. Can I be checking out in the line, and feeling my feet on the floor, and seeing the person, and maybe interact, and part of my attention is going to my feet? Can that be part of my living?

And we're actually using everyday life situations to embody, I'm here. I'm here. This is a direct way of anchoring in this moment. And it's not — that's not the end point, but that's a very helpful step.

[Participant 7:] It's the pause, too, and each time it's the pause, and how the body keeps pausing.

[Russell:] Yeah. So just let — we'll come to the other things in a moment, but just let this resonate for a moment, however that is for you.

[Silence 32 seconds]

[Participant 8:] So I'm here more, and so I'm more in the edges.

[Russell:] A little bit louder.

[Participant 8:] So I'm here more in this, and I'm here more, and larger, so I can play more there, can take up more space here. And there's all kinds of images and stories and gratitude, and it's fresh. There's sweetness, and there's a coming home, and there's a new love. And so I'm just really grateful. I'm just really grateful.

[Russell:] Yeah.

Eyes and what we take in

[Russell:] Bob, you kind of have —

[Participant 9:] Yeah. For me, it's not one.

[Russell:] Right. Yes.

[Participant 9:] My experience with Bruno. He was my partner. It was really important, and I'm going to use the word resourcing. I need to use that word.

[Russell:] Yeah. Oh, it is. Yes, yes, yes.

[Participant 9:] I almost hate the flaw. It's too negative, but it's a weakness. It's something I really have to work on.

And it was so nice working with Bruno, because he really presented a very — how do I say — stable or grounded visage for me. And it gave me a chance to look into his eyes without running away.

Because there's two aspects. Like this one is, I don't like people looking into my eyes, because I feel like really not wanting. So there's this tendency, no, you can't look at that. That's not allowed.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 9:] But the other is, going the other way. When I look at somebody, I can see all too often fear, sadness, all this other stuff. So I'm not sure I want to absorb that, because I didn't know how.

So my point is that as we've done all this space work, and you kind of shared that, I can look into their eyes, and if I see that, I don't have to own it. That's that practice, that I just need to come back and hold myself, and let all of that be around me, but I don't need to necessarily absorb. That's huge for me.

[Russell:] That is huge.

[Participant 9:] Just one last thing. So one of the points — I was looking at Bruno, was telling me — his face changed to somebody that I'm fearful of looking into their eyes. And it was just really a reminder to me. I really got to practice this. But it's a little scary to practice on somebody outside this group, that one doesn't know what I'm doing, and why are you looking at me?

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 9:] It's a very integrated practice that came to me as I was looking into Bruno's eyes. I have to use each of the elements that you're teaching me just to be able to look at somebody else's eyes. It's incredible.

[Russell:] Yeah. Yeah, beautiful. Yeah, thank you, Bob.

[Participant 9:] Thank you.

[Russell:] Yeah.

So let me just put out an invitation with that. Okay?

Now, it's actually to make some steps, because it's not so easy to go directly, and this may not even seem like it's close, but I believe it could be very helpful. Spending a little longer gazing at anonymous people who don't know you're looking at them, and radiating your best wishes.

Because it's not only looking in people's eyes. There's a bodily habit you have of dropping your head. And that's where you'll go. Sometimes it's helpful, because it's inner reflection, but sometimes it's just habit.

So, to lift your head, just to gaze towards others when they don't know you're looking at them. And they're just like you. They want to be happy and not suffer, and send them some good wishes. But it's a practice of letting your eyes open toward others. Okay.

Well, actually, Robert had something, I think, first. Go ahead. Okay, go ahead, Karen.

Safety in the open gaze

[Participant 10:] Yeah. This relates a little, because of the other day, our focus of meditation on safety.

[Russell:] Yes, right.

[Participant 10:] When I looked at my, I think, historic childhood life, I couldn't find a difference. But recently I've had the experience of safety, just on my way here, in the airport. I was walking to the airport, and I think, influenced because I've been practicing a little bit of Aikido, I felt like my eyes were up and level and seeing people.

And so I was kind of resourcing with that a little bit this morning, because I talked yesterday, and I realized, wait a minute, I said I didn't know the difference yet. I recently had an experience of — it was like the words came, wow, I feel safe here. Walking around in this airport, and big people, big strangers, who knows who.

So there was something about that. The vision feels part of that, and the eye contact, sometimes also being the space around. It's not even so much about eye contact, but a very big focus for me, and I was very connected to safety. And when I close in my world, I actually feel less safe.

[Russell:] Yeah. Yeah.

Robert, did you want to say something? Want to follow up with that?

[Participant 11:] No.

Needs and vulnerability

[Participant 11:] First report.

[Russell:] Carl, how are you?

[Participant 12:] Yeah. I'm more present.

[Russell:] What's that?

[Participant 11:] First report that I'd like to make, and then more present speaking. And — report. When Carl was the ocean, I was able — I was very new to coming — to come with my sort of embodied sense of need.

[Russell:] Need.

[Participant 11:] Need. And ask — petition the ocean.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 11:] And then also, at one point, feel that this was accepted, or it was contained in the ocean. And then while I was sitting here, I had the sense. I said, that was a positive experience of vulnerability. Oh, that's what that feels like.

[Russell:] Beautiful. Yes.

[Participant 11:] Yes. Yeah.

So now that I'm speaking, I'm also realizing how I can learn to do these practices. I can learn through them.

[Russell:] Yes.

[Participant 11:] But it's much harder for me to just be here, and be here with all of you. And I feel very exposed when I say that. But the hardest thing for me is to take these practices, which are

very opening and joyful, and give me a sense of such possibility, and to bring that down into being here, and not hiding.

[Russell:] Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[Participant 11:] And even now, I tend to hide in my doing self. Look what I'm doing. I'm sorry, I'm kind of losing my ground here. But there's a fear.

[Russell:] Do you feel like you're hiding right now?

[Participant 11:] Thank you for the questions. I'm just on the edge of a border of hiding and not hiding.

[Russell:] Oh, sweet.

[Participant 11:] Yeah, right on that.

[Russell:] Oh, feel the energy of that edge. Feel the energy of that edge. Right. It's alive right now.

[Participant 11:] Yeah. A lifetime of not being able to be here.

[Russell:] Yeah. And that place that feels that — you're with that. You're here. Can you feel? That's here. That place.

[Participant 11:] Thank you.

[Russell:] Yeah. Feel what we just did. Could you feel the energy that we just did? Because that place of acknowledging not being here started to pull you into that, and actually take you away from here, and acknowledging that it was there. Being with it lets you come forward again. The energy was very clear.

[Participant 11:] Oh, it's precious. Thank you.

[Russell:] Thank you.

[Participant 11:] Thank you. It's a great gift.

[Russell:] One of the things that we really want, each of us — and we're not going to do it so much this time, we will more in future times — but in our own inner life, to begin to differentiate between the beauty of having needs and putting them out, and how that's different from neediness.

We're all so afraid of being needy. None of us want to be needy. I mean, feel what happens in your body when you go, you're needy. That's not where you want to live, right? But to be able to recognize, I'm really needing some contact, or I'm really needing some alone time, or I'm really needing more listening, or I'm really needing more safety. To recognize those as gifts to the inner life, and gifts to those we're connecting to.

And it's really different, because if I don't recognize that need, then I might say things like, you don't give me enough attention. Real good chance of getting my need for confidence there. Right?

But if I can really honor this quality — there's a man who works in NVC called Robert Gonzalez, who talks about the beauty of needs. That's where that expression comes from. I don't know him personally, but I like that expression.

And we can all work with that. Because there's something about our intimacy with our inner life and others. It's so denied, right? But it's different to be in touch with our needs, and be able to keep company with our needs, and put out requests from our needs. If not, we'll start manipulating. We all do that, right? Get in there.

Thank you, Robert.

[Participant 11:] Yeah.

Spread your wings

[Participant 13:] So I originally said that I didn't have a comment to Karen, but after Robert spoke, I can see Mars has threads in both of them.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 13:] Yesterday, when we did the blindfold outside exercise, which I didn't really hear anybody speak to, and I'd love to hear people's comments at lunch. Felicity was my partner, and I found this part of me in relation to the unsafeness that Karen was speaking to, and safe — feeling the world around her.

That when I was the person being blindfolded, I immediately wanted her to take me to the most risky adventure places possible. Like taking the narrow roads, and I want to get really far away. And at one point I said, okay, take me to a place that I can run. And I was really trying to find my edge. And so she said, okay, we're at a place that you can run. And I was like, okay, go further. And so she'd take a few steps, and she said, okay, you can run. And I'm like, no, no, no, go further. And I kept wanting her to get further and further and further.

And then when I started running, it was so exhilarating. It was just so like, this is my edge. It was terrifying and exhilarating. One moment. And I needed her. I really needed her.

And so what came from that — and I haven't even shared this with her yet. I did share with her that I had a lot of insights around the relationship with my mother. But sitting here and listening to everyone sharing, it's so much more than just the relationship with my mother. It's the relationship with myself, with life, with everything.

And where it comes into connection with my mom is, over the last few years, I've done a lot of things that are very unfamiliar, and I've really pushed her buttons and triggered her, and not with any intention to, but just looking for my narrow path, my risky, adventurous path. And it's almost been like, Mom, I want you to go way — but if I start to slip, I want you to go — I want you to grab me, right here.

And this feeling became very — the quality that came up for me was trust. That in my life, I want to feel I have enough trust that everyone will say, spread your wings and go as far as you can, and know that we won't give up on you. We won't forget about you. We won't deny you. We won't judge you. We will always be right here to hold you the moment that you're saying, I need to be known.

And so it was a really very powerful lesson, and also just a lot of compassion, because it made me really realize just how difficult I am to raise. Like, wow, Mom, I've been kind of hard on you for

years. But it just is a thread. And I'm honestly sharing from a place of aha and insight, but that still feels like a whole world.

[Russell:] Yes, it's a whole world. A whole world. A whole world. Yes. Yes. Yes.

And it's so wonderful, so full. And can you sense, Tom, that voice, that voice turning back towards yourself? Spread your wings.

Will I — meaning that true Tom being — never abandon you. I am with you. Spread your wings. I've got your back. I am with you.

See how that resonates.

[Silence 2 minutes]

[Participant 13:] Love being here.

[Silence 2 minutes]

[Participant 14:] I'm just so present, too, to how powerful it was. What you shared really spoke with me, and just not having anything at all to say, but just that real edge of wanting to feel like you don't lose yourself when you're with a group. It really took me to a place of my age.

Closing

[Russell:] Going to have a little pause. Bathing in some — rare.

May said the other day, the sour cream that we were all eating, he thought was a wonderful hand cream. It was so luxurious. So some of us who saw that, you know, luxuriate in the sour cream.

Okay, let's continue. I'd like to start some movement work at 11:30, so about 12, 13 minutes.