Movement lesson

Angela 2 — Week 3, Day 6, Session 4 — 48 minutes

Summary: Blindfolded on the floor, the group explores length and width through the breath, then differentiates the hand and lifts the arms while lying prone so the back, spine, pelvis, and legs organize together. Attention opens into the back space. Standing afterward, they notice changes in shape and support, then hear a request to reflect on yesterday's focusing.

On the back

[Russell:] It's a very wonderful, powerful lesson that's also demanding. So give yourself breaks if you need them, more frequently than I'm giving them to you.

It's a lesson that, in my experience, can do wonders for really empowering the back, and bringing a real awareness of the back space.

And I'd like to experiment with it blindfolded. So we're not gonna need to sit. Do you want that for your head, the cushion, or will you — okay, for your arm. Okay, great.

Okay, so let's put on your blindfold. Well, first get a sense of how far people are from you.

Yeah, oh, actually, thank you. What I'd like to recommend is that we go every other person, with the head at an opposite end.

Yeah, right, you guys can organize yourselves. So if you're up there, you're down there, you're up — right, that's it. Good.

Okay, now. Great, okay.

Put on your blindfold and enjoy the ground. Lie on your back.

And sense how you're breathing and the ground interact — how your back — part of your breathing.

And put your arms out at shoulder height, backs of your hands on the floor, so you're wide, and you sense your length as well.

Just a couple of sweeps of attention and breath through your spine, lengthwise through your spine, from above your head, traveling down. Just sweeping your attention through the bottom of your pelvis, and exhaling up and out.

A sense of the exhale without doing anything, inviting a feeling of length through the spine. So inhaling down through you, and then exhaling as if the air rushing up created just a little space between each vertebrae — just a little invitation to it for an upward push towards your head — and then as if your neck would get longer. But you're not trying to stretch or anything. You're just imagining the breath coming through you, and a lengthening on the exhale.

And then sensing your width. So imagining the breath coming through your skull, through your neck, and going out both arms, out into space through your arms. And you're actually doing this maybe challenging, maybe interesting also practice of bifurcating your attention — that your attention is going left and right. And you might even feel how your eyes widen a bit as you attend left and right.

There's a widening of the self to open into space, left and right, and then the exhale comes back through you. Through the fingertips, through the arms, and up the neck, and out the head. So just a few breaths like that.

And then add the pressing of all ten nails to the floor, the fingernails to the floor, with the inhale, as if this is a rush of air out your fingers. Exhaling from out in space through your arms, letting the fingernails rest, and you come back up and out. So a few sweeps of mind, horizontally.

And it's very possible you'll find, jeez, I can't move my mind in both directions. I can go back and forth quickly. That's okay. Just keep experimenting. It's something that can dawn on you, how to split the attention in that way, and it's helpful.

Differentiating the hand

And let that rest, and please roll onto your front, looking leftward. Your left arm out to the side, your left knee bent out to the side.

Your left arm long out to the left, so the elbow is long and the hand is approximately shoulder height. The left knee is bent out to the side.

And you're free to put your right arm wherever, and you can change it as you're experimenting.

And get the feeling of how you can lift the fingers of your left hand, the palm, and then lower the palm, lower the fingers. So you're not lifting the whole arm. It's fingers, palm, and then lowering the palm and the fingers. It's differentiating the hand, is what we call it.

And it's neurologically sophisticated to differentiate like that.

And so you're lifting the fingers, and then the palm, then lowering the palm, and lowering the fingers, and then fingers, palm, and arm. And find out, what can you do with your torso to help that arm to lift? So you're not just focusing on the shoulder, but you're letting your whole self help. Lead with the fingers.

Feel where that right arm won't get in your way.

Let the backs of the fingers lead you.

The head rolls. Imagine that you wanted to see the hand. Feel how that goes, how that would lift. The wrist bent back, the fingers leading.

So it's like implying a kind of extension through the back. That's it. And implying a movement through that shoulder blade. That's it. It's much freer today, starting out, than yesterday. Great. Okay. Leave that. Rest comfortably on your front.

Hey.

Look to your right, bend your right leg out to the side, put your right arm out, and just lift the right fingers, leaving the palm on the floor, and then lift the palm, and then lower the palm and lower the fingers. Just feel that a number of times.

So the base of the hand will stay on the floor. You're not lifting the whole arm.

That's it. In the background, there's a sense of breathing.

That's it. And then progress to where the arm begins to lift, and you're listening for how your whole self is connected to that arm lifting.

Feel how your back, the movements of your head, your eyes, pelvis — all through you.

And depending on where that left arm is, that will likely influence the freedom of your rotation of your spine.

So you're experimenting, you're exploring.

It's really quite remarkable to see the kind of learning that took place from doing the lesson — the first section of the lesson yesterday.

Right. The connections through the body.

No need to force, but just let your body find a way of following that hand. That's great. Okay. And pause, rest comfortably.

The arm behind

And have your legs long, and look to the left, and put your right arm out at shoulder height, and experiment with how — let the palm be on the floor. How could you raise the fingers, and then the palm, and then lower the palm, and then the fingers?

And notice how different it is, tracking the hand behind you.

And is that true? That somehow, even though you're blindfolded, it's a different sense of what it's like to move. And if you wanna feel that difference, you could turn your head to the right for a few moments.

What's different about the sense of something — maybe like closeness, or hiddenness?

Is there something, even though seeing is not the issue, but the arm that's behind your head has a different representation, we could say.

So then again, end up where you're looking left and the arm is to the right, and feel how you could then continue and raise the arm off the floor. But go through the progression, so you're leading with your fingers.

How could that right arm lift, and you're looking leftward?

Feel where you would want to have your left arm.

And experiment on your own — bending which leg would make it easier?

Okay, so you can experiment on your own. Does bending the right leg out to the side somehow help the right arm to lift, or would bending the left leg make it easier or harder?

Just kinda — and then as you're exploring that, it's not like you're trying to answer the right or wrong question. You're experimenting with how it is influenced. How is my vertebral column, or my ability to rotate in my spine, influenced by my pelvis and legs?

Because of course, when you bend the leg, the pelvis on that side lifts. So it's not just the leg. It's the whole — all the way from probably your mid back down. I think there's a very big skeletal change when the leg is —

Just kinda play with what happens. Beautiful. Nice, feel that. Great.

Okay, leave that for a few moments and come lie on your back. Just get a little rest from that.

[Silence 35 seconds]

Roll your head a bit.

[Silence 31 seconds]

And just rest here.

Is there something — again, going back to the first day — is there something different about lying here with a blindfold and lying here with your eyes closed? How is that?

Somehow your inner sense influenced differently.

Looking away

And then please come onto your front and look rightward, with both legs long. And your left arm extended out to the side.

Just take a moment to sense this configuration.

Excuse me.

You're looking rightward, and the left arm is out to the side.

[Silence 35 seconds]

Okay, now begin with your fingers and your palm, and just do that, and sense how far through your torso do you sense an influence of lifting your fingers and your palm?

Does your shoulder blade somehow have some sense of that — or not?

And if so, where else in your back do you feel there is — just lifting my fingers and palm like that seems to create some kind of resonance or involvement.

And then, once you've done that, lift the arm, and experiment.

You are looking rightward, and — yes. Unless the arm keeps coming up and the head would — in other words, don't turn the head as a strategy for moving the arm. It grows out of it.

And then begin to experiment with bending one leg and then the other, and tracking the influence of the leg bending on the lifting of the arm.

And seeing how could you describe the skeletal pattern to yourself that happens.

So your left arm is lifting in the air, and you're experimenting with different bendings of your legs, and seeing how this can go through your spine more and more freely.

Good. Great. Okay.

Now, pause once again, and roll onto your back. Maybe take a little pause on your back, listening to how your shape is changing.

[Silence 36 seconds]

How your breath is being influenced.

[Silence 43 seconds]

Following the hand

Turn onto your front, looking leftward, with your left arm outward, and bend your right leg out to the side.

Feel that whole shape through. Just even being in these non-habitual shapes invite a shifting in your skeleton. Vertebrae need to find different organizations.

So you're looking left, your left arm's out, your right leg is bent. Seeing how could I lift my fingers on an arm in this position? How do I navigate? How do I free you from the floor, and where would I want my right arm?

What?

And begin to let yourself lift your head, as if you wanted to really follow the hand. Your head is free to lift a bit.

Do a number of times. Feel how that organizes in your back, and then once you've felt that at least five or six times, then change over your bending of the legs. Let your left leg bend and your right leg get long, and see how you can follow that arm through space.

Let your head go, let your head help, look around.

What would it be like if the right arm was upward and long, or downward and long — feel the differences.

How can that — and is there a way that this movement can travel actually through your pelvis?

Now we're experimenting with the left leg that's bent. All the way. Your head turned. Eyes are part of the movement. You're interested in your back space. What's behind you? What's back there?

Nice. Beautiful. Okay, leave it. Rest on your front.

[Silence 47 seconds]

A harder arrangement

And look to your right, the right arm out. Begin with your left leg bent. And why would we want to do something like this?

Well, you know, Feldenkrais had this understanding that if you bring to the nervous system some challenges, some motor challenges, and investigate in curious, listening ways, that begins to find solutions — makes it a little bit easier, a little bit freer.

Then when you go back to the easier way, when the right leg is bent, you might find that it's even improved from having dealt with the difficulty of this.

One of the learning strategies — helping your system become more harmonious, the parts more interconnected, sometimes by giving challenges to the system.

So begin with the fingers, then the palm, and then lift the arm, and feel what happens. What makes it easier? How does the shoulder blade move? What's the breathing part of it?

You're free to lift the head if you like.

Excuse me? Yeah, that stays bent, yes. It stays bent. It can be bent a little less, a little more, but it stays bent. You want the left side of the pelvis lifted, and you're navigating with that.

So it's the right arm, and you're looking right, and you're lifting the arm.

Once you've sensed that five, six times, seven times, change over the legs, and let that move through you. That's it.

Nice. For some people, the fingers will begin pointing to the ceiling. For some people, they'll touch the floor behind them. It's not the goal, but you want to open attention into the back space, and letting that go through you, and letting the pelvis and legs respond.

But only as much as that feels good and right and harmonious and fluid.

Letting that go really through yourself.

Nice, and then pause. Rest for a moment. Rest in any comfortable position.

[Silence 49 seconds]

Both arms

And please come back to your front, if you've left your front. Put both arms out to the side, look to the left, and follow the fingers of both hands lifting up, and putting them back — just the fingers, just the fingers at first, and then the palms. And then lower the palms, lower the fingers. Go through that a few times, and then begin to get a feeling how you might be able to lift both arms in the air. What would that be like? Not so simple.

No, you're on your front. You're lying on your front now. I thought you were doing that because you didn't want to be on your front.

Okay, and bend your left leg out to the side. Feel free to let your head lift, and feel how your whole upper chest can get free from the floor, and experiment with lowering one arm and then the other.

As if you're flying through space, then you're kind of navigating with your wings.

You're looking left, and you're lifting one more, and then the other more, and you're breathing. You can let your head turn in the air. Lower it when you like, but you're letting your whole back be active in that way. Great.

Okay, rest your arms for a moment.

Bend your right knee out to the side. Turn to look to the right. Yeah, straighten your left leg, yes. Bend your right leg out to the side, look to the right, have both arms out at shoulder height.

And just pause here for a moment. Feel the shape. Right leg bent, both arms out, facing rightward. Breathing here.

Feel how you could lift your right arm. Begin with the fingers, hands, and then arm — just the right arm. That's it, nice. Feel how that goes through you. And let your head lift. And you feel how you're constrained a little bit by that left shoulder, and then still looking right, feel the left arm. Lift the fingers, palm, and arm. Let the right arm rest. Left arm. That's it. Feel how that goes through you.

Feel how your ribs respond, how you can be in connection with the back arm.

And then begin to play with both arms. Both arms leading with the backs of your fingers. You can let the hand lift, you let the head lift.

If you wanted to see one hand, and then you wanted to see the other, and one hand can go up and the other down, and then one can go down and the other up, and you can be gliding through space.

Feel that.

You can even alternate which leg is bent, if you like, as you're floating through space. You can do one leg and the other, and the arm.

So the left arm lifts, you probably want the left leg bent and the head looking up at the left hand, and fly away, fly away.

Sweet. Beautiful. That's nice, fluid movement. Beautiful. Leave it. Come onto your back.

[Silence 40 seconds]

Standing

Just sense yourself here. Sense your breathing.

Does your head turn a bit?

Sense the shape of yourself. You're on the floor.

Sense your volume, how the back of you is alive.

And then, keeping your mind focused on — roll to your side, come to sitting.

Know what — what's interesting, perhaps, in where I think is, where your sense of the space is, where your head is, where your head is kept. Height.

And when you feel ready, bring yourself up to standing and get a sense of yourself all the way up.

Feel the influence on your shape, and your sense of space.

Feel how your head is carried.

Feel how far down your back you get support for your head.

Against the back of your body, and the space behind you.

And then take off your blindfold and find a way to adjust to the light.

Notice how you can tune to the world around you, and to yourself.

And that's a good idea, Tom. So feel that opening movement. Feel what happens in your shoulder blades, across your — height, top of your head, supported all the way down.

Span and sense, and what comes to you? What gets your attention?

What's your size like? What's your shape like? Shape of your space around you?

A wingspan comes from central lines that are stretching out. Yeah, oh, nice, yes.

That our open eyes — better organized. Hands more connected to the core, yeah.

How you doing, Nettie?

And this is true of a number of people, but I want to specify. So Bob, can you feel how your head is lifted? Even when you were sitting, you were in a very different relationship to your spine. Numbers of people have this kind of growing out. Aaron, can you feel that also?

[Participant:] The chest feels much lighter, too, just the whole. I also feel more ready to flex, to — it welcomes. Not just for contrast, but just because it's very available.

[Russell:] Very available. Yeah. Right, yeah, I really see that widening.

Okay, so it's time for our lunch. I would like to meet at three o'clock, with blindfolds, in the lower parking lot. Okay, so out there at three o'clock.

Second request is to reflect back on your experience focusing yesterday, and if there were any other particular moves that you made, or that your partner reminded you of — or if you did them yourself, that's fine — that were particularly helpful. And any places where you would have liked some guidance, or you weren't sure how to navigate.

I'd like to have, after we work outside, a little focusing conversation, and then have another experience of partnering. Okay, so.

[Participant:] So is that guidance in movement or guidance in action?

[Russell:] Guidance during — while you were in the session, while you were working with yourself. Yes, how you were approaching whatever was coming up for you, like that.

Okay, have a nice lunch.