Movement lesson

Angela 2 — Week 3, Day 7, Session 4 — 50 minutes

Summary: Standing, the back space becomes a tether so walking does not spill ahead of center. On the floor a wide arm circle travels overhead, to the sides, and around the body, with the legs as training wheels. A playful puzzle follows: pass a leg through the circle, then return to walking in a larger space.

The tether

Just start standing, please.

Yep. Standing here, immediately feel how you can have the ground and the up.

Notice if your knees feel blocked. Get some freedom in your knees and in your ankles. Notice the space around yourself.

This back space is like a tether. It's like when we're moving forward — actually, walk a little bit.

Notice. You know the image. Have you ever seen a motorboat go across a lake, and it leaves a wake behind it?

Well, can you imagine that behind you is this wake? And when you're going forward, there's some energy behind you, and it keeps you from spilling into the next moment.

Do you ever have that feeling like you're spilling? Kind of like your center of gravity's ahead of you, and you tend to fall into the moment, and you're kind of like, whoops.

Well, the back space is a key tether — and actually put your hands on your shirt and give yourself just a slight pull backward. It's not something to hold you back. It's to give you an energy that helps you actually be upright. So you're not leaning forward, falling into the next moment. You're just going forward with some kind of —

And they're also making more honest decisions about what direction to take in the room. Yeah. It's like being over our center.

And pause, and standing.

If you look at me for a moment, what so many of us do is fall into it. We're ahead of our center of gravity. Or if we're trying to hold ourselves back, it's like we throw our upper body back.

And we try to bring it forward, or we try to balance somehow, but there's not the feeling like the whole self is here on this spot and going forward.

Actually, take a step. Take your left foot front, pointing forward, your right foot kind of at an angle. The heels can be a little kind of lined up.

And just feel how you can turn rightward and go back. Look behind you. Just let your feet turn. Let your feet swivel on your heels. And now you're pointing the opposite direction. Actually, let your feet swivel rightward. Swivel on your heels around.

So the heels — you're just turning your toe, and you're turning 180 degrees. So here's your center. You're looking forward. Left foot is forward. Got a center, got a ground, got an up.

And Feldenkrais used to like to say, the way you can know you're omnipotent — or actually the center of the whole world — is right now, Japan is in front of you, and now it's behind you. That you can turn the whole world around, just by turning.

But see if you can get the feeling of just turning, and find a way. Where do you need your feet so that you can balance yourself? And just feel like you turn.

Now, just your center turns. And feel that you actually can come — and when you come around, have the sense of, I'm here, ready to face my world. I'm here.

Let the space around your body be here as well. So, I'm here. Let your hands come out a little bit, almost like you're carving out a space around your body.

Imagine the hands could be out from your center, as if there was a radiance out here. The back hand can be anywhere. Then as you turn, the hands change, and this hand's in front.

So let's think of it like this. Normally we touch the center like this. Now it's as if you're in the field around — and don't strain or anything. It doesn't have to be equal distances, but you're in the field around your center.

You can get a feeling. There's a classic martial arts exercise. Yeah. Turning left. I don't do it.

Now just feel yourself standing. Separate your feet and turn, just letting your arms come around, letting your head and eyes come around. Let your knees soften. Your feet are a little bit wider than your pelvis, so you have a sense of more stability in your stance. And you're looking behind you. You're inhabiting this space. It's as if your hands are delineating the world that's around your body that's part of you.

Then once again.

Close your eyes. Feel your backbone.

The circle

Make a big circle with your hands. Let them interlace.

Moshe had, I think, a Ukrainian expression that he would use. Make your hands big. Make your arms big and round, like you're hugging your grandfather's uncle.

This must be from the old times.

And so turn around yourself, but keep the circle. And from this, think of your center. So we're creating a sense of roundness. Your head comes around. Sense of round. Your elbows are wide.

In some of this movement, the elbows are going to start to want to straighten. See if you can keep a sense of round.

Come onto your back.

And take off your glasses.

Bend your legs to standing. Create that circle with your arms. The elbows are wide. And keeping the circle, bring the hands towards the floor over your head.

Go slow, go slow. Listen. Go down and up a number of times, feeling how that goes through your shoulders, your back.

And, kind of similar to a lesson we did early on this segment, lift your pelvis as you lower your arms overhead, keeping the roundness. Watch for your elbows beginning to straighten. So the elbows stay round. Remember your grandfather's uncle. He's a little wide.

I don't know why your grandfather's uncle is particularly wide, but go with it, you know?

So there's a circle going over your head, and the pelvis is lifting. Your fingers are interlaced. Your pelvis is lifting, and maybe the thumb side of your hand can come to the floor overhead. Maybe the whole outer arms can rest on the floor for a moment in that wideness.

The elbows are quite wide, so the pelvis in the air will help the arms come to the floor more readily.

And then, with your arms either on the floor or near the floor, notice if you can lower your pelvis. Go slow enough that you feel — is there some space in which the shoulders can begin to accommodate? And of course, let the hands lift when they need to, but see if your arms can stay down a little bit longer.

That's good.

Okay, and then bring them back up and pause. Lower your arms to your side. Rest here.

Bend your legs. Make a circle with your arms. And lower the arms downward towards your pelvis, keeping that real wide feeling.

Feel what happens in your chest, your shoulders. How can you keep the elbows really wide as you lower down? Feel what has to happen in the front of your shoulder joints, in your upper ribs.

And just a few times, as you lower your arms, lift your head to see where your hands are going. So the whole chest kind of folds.

And then go above your head, lifting your pelvis — down, lifting your head — and just let that whole round feeling, and what has to happen in your shoulder blades and upper chest, let all that happen.

You might want to turn around on your mat. That'll make it easier.

Good.

Okay, and leave that. Lower your arms.

[Silence 56 seconds]

Bend your arms into the circle position, and keeping the circle, feel how you can lower the arms rightward.

If the left elbow's gonna start straightening, really be aware of what you have to do to have that circle. Something with your shoulder, something with the left side of your chest, something down

through your pelvis. And like we did before, bend your left leg, push off the foot so you can get some support, and you can feel the interconnection. That'll make it a little easier, perhaps, to keep the circle.

And once you feel that a few times, then begin to find out — can you somehow use whatever you're doing with the leg bent? Is it possible that your spine or your ribs can have some of that pattern, even with the leg locked?

And so you can go back and forth a little bit, to see if you can actually teach your nervous system what it's like to keep the elbows wide, and really be able to rotate that much without straining.

Bending the leg is like using training wheels to learn to ride a bike. You get a lot of the situation sensed, and then when you're ready, you take off the training wheels and see, well, can I do the next bit without the training wheels?

And then come back to your back and let your arms come down, and just enjoy resting here.

Just taking that position in consciousness, as if you're noticing the one on the floor from a larger space.

[Silence 41 seconds]

And interlace your hands non-habitually, and keeping that circle. Do it first — just imagine going leftward, and imagine what that's gonna feel like in your chest. How far down your back you're likely to sense it. Let your imagination work. What your pelvis will do.

And then once you have some kind of inner images, begin to do it and see how your image of the movement and the actual movement interact and clarify your image. And feel how the arms can have that circle, and keep going, maybe to the point where the left upper arm comes to the floor. Maybe. You don't know.

And then begin to experiment with standing the right leg, getting that help, getting the reinforcements from the lower part of your body, doing that a number of times. Sensing the connections, and then work your way back to the long leg.

And you can do that on your own. You can do that when you're out to the side, and you've used the bent leg, and then you lengthen the leg. There are numbers of ways, but experiment.

Let your head roll. Let your eyes be in your field also. They can help. Freedom of the eyes helps the spine to be free, so being conscious of the movements of your eyes can be helpful.

Feldenkrais would say that one of the reasons people's movements, when they get older, get less fluid is their eyes get slower in movement. And actually, keeping the fluidity of your eye movement is an important part of the fluidity of your spine. Interesting connection.

So then go left and right with your arms. Go through, circling, feeling how your pelvis relates to your grandfather's uncle.

Nice. Good.

Good. Okay, leave it. Lower down.

[Silence 54 seconds]

Circling circles

Bend your legs. Make the circle with the arms. And non-habitually — thank you.

And feel what it's like to bring the arms to your right with your legs bent. You're free to let the knees move. You're free to do whatever helps.

And once you're over towards the right, where that right arm comes to the floor, if you can have that, then begin to go upward, as if you're gonna go, keeping the circle, over your head on the floor, and keeping the circle, sliding leftward, and then keeping the circle going to where your left upper arm is on the floor, and then keeping the circle, letting the hands come over your belly.

So you make a full circle around yourself with your circle. Those circling circles.

And you're free to push off your feet if you need to, get support. If your hands can't come comfortably to the floor overhead, see if lifting your pelvis will help.

Great.

And lengthen your legs. Reverse direction of your circle, keeping those elbows wide, and noticing how you can come out of your back for your hands to come overhead.

Your arms need to be connected all the way through your lower back for the hands to really come overhead and have that circle.

That's it. And feel how the pelvis really needs to turn to get them over to the side.

Great. Oh, beautiful.

Okay, and take a pause.

[Silence 30 seconds]

A puzzle

I'll give you a little bit of a puzzle, and I encourage you to keep your eyes closed.

So, make a circle with your arms, habitual interlacing, and you're free to do whatever will be helpful. And I encourage you to be playful.

How would you get your right leg through that circle, or that circle around your right leg?

Do it.

Yeah, yeah, but you keep your hands circling. In other words, you don't let go of your hands. Surround your leg, and then — right, so you keep the circle, and you feel, what would it mean for that circle to come around your leg?

Breathing.

No, it's gonna be a circle. No, you can't lengthen. No, it stays a circle. Yeah.

So play. So, your eyes are closed. Correct. Your hands will ultimately be under your thigh somehow. See if that's possible. See if you can even imagine it. Keep your eyes closed if you can.

Well, yeah, unless you can think of another way of surrounding your leg. Yeah, your foot's gonna probably have to go through that circle.

That's the next lesson. Okay, rest on the back. I'll give you some more guidance.

Hopefully, you can be playful with it.

Hopefully, even though it is considered one of the great intelligence tests, I hope you don't think of it that way.

And bend your legs. Put your right ankle on your left thigh near the knee. Interlace your hands, make a circle, and lift your left foot off the floor, and see if you can get your foot somewhere near your circle.

But yeah, you can lift your head. In other words, you need to fold the whole front of your body somehow.

And it might be true that rolling towards your side might be helpful. You kind of have to go to your simian consciousness. You gotta be a monkey here. So go to your simian consciousness and see what would help fold you.

Where are we going?

Yeah, you're bringing the leg through the circle, and ideally getting your hands behind your thigh. And then we'll work on bringing the circle up around your pelvis and around your head and around — no, I'm not kidding.

See if you can find a light. And that's it, that's it.

Okay, leave it. Lower down. It will get clearer.

And just let yourself breathe and feel. Feel whether you're getting that far or not. Feel the shape of your chest, the volume in your torso.

[Silence 32 seconds]

Bend your legs. Bring your left ankle to your right thigh. And just lift your right foot a few times off the floor, just kind of bringing your right knee and your left foot a little bit towards your chest, just kind of lifting that way.

Feel how you can, and then go a little right and left. Just let it get kind of easy and free, with the right foot off the floor and the left foot being carried by the right leg.

And you're just feeling how you can move in space, bending that right leg, and then going out to the right, out to the left, in that kind of unusual bent configuration.

And then begin to interlace your hands non-habitually, creating the circle, and begin to see how the circle and the left foot could get near each other.

The circle and the left foot might get near each other. Maybe will, maybe won't, but you're going in that direction.

And then, sometimes one of the great learning strategies, on your way to finding that, is to cheat.

So let your arms get a little longer. Oh, they actually can get around the foot. Okay, now, could I find a way to do that with a circle? So what is cheating here?

Cheating is finding a simpler option that gives your nervous system close to the experience, and then you back your way towards the totality of the experience.

So feel, how could you get your arms around that foot?

And then if you still can't find a way, there's another way that we can use cheating as a helpful thing. Just interlace your hands around your thigh and try to come out from that side.

So just let your hands go. Interlace around your thigh, and then see, could you come around your lower leg and foot? In other words, could you do it backwards?

Yeah, sure. Oh, yeah, sure.

And then, well, there actually are a couple of people who can do it without touching, but that's not the goal here. That's kind of fun, though.

But see if you can find — this, by the way, is another brilliant idea of Feldenkrais: reverse your direction. If you're having difficulty with something going from A to Z, see if you can go from Z to A.

Just to give you an example of applications. So if a child can't bring their hand to their head, maybe bring their head to their hand. It's feeding. Or you put them together and see how you could take them apart. So you work in an opposite direction to growing the skill.

Okay, leave it. Lower down.

Feel your shape.

[Silence 31 seconds]

Playing

And with your eyes closed, come up to sitting.

Make a circle with your arms and feel how you might bring your right foot through the circle. Now, you don't have to stay sitting. You're just starting sitting, and you're free to do whatever is helpful to help that foot get through.

Now, first begin with the circle. If you need to let go of the circle to get the foot through, or if you need to roll to your side, or need to roll back, you feel what would help.

And those of you who feel you can do it fairly simply, you can then go from one leg to the other. You always just stay with the right leg for now, until you can.

That's it. Right. Feel what angles. Play, play.

Infants like to play with their feet, even in utero. Monkeys are always playing with their feet. It's so helpful for the freedom of the spine to be able to lengthen the arms like that.

And what's your breathing? Where does your breathing occur?

Now, if you can get one leg through, keep that leg through and bring the other leg through. So can you have both legs through?

Yeah, and if you can get both legs through, see if you can stand up.

You're funny.

Soon, soon.

Just kind of play. How could you move through space like this?

And meanwhile, as a subtext, your interest is getting freer. But that's just the fact, which is really a good idea, right?

Okay, you can open your eyes, I guess, and play a little bit more. See?

And then if you can get your legs through, see if you can step out. How could you step one leg out? And then the other. How would we do that?

And you're free to go in any — there you go, yeah.

And I've had some people jump in and out.

Really? Not joking?

Oh, sure.

Okay. Lie on your back. Enjoy your life.

Yeah, feel the space inside your chest.

Width, and the volume.

[Silence 34 seconds]

And as your arms come out at shoulder height — just resting on the floor at shoulder height — feel the width between your shoulder blades, across your chest.

Touch your legs. Sense your back, and into the floor, sensing through your back space.

Walking

And then roll to your side. Come on up to standing.

As you come up, get the impression of what your space around you is like, what your shape is like.

And let your hands not be touching, but round. Sensing the space, like we did at the beginning. All around you, letting your knees soften, your ankles soften.

As if this space all around you — and you can even come up and down as you turn — the space all around you, the back space, the side, the up, all of this is part of your living body, part of the space that you inhabit. Your functional body, your experiential, includes all of this here.

And just begin to walk. A little bit exaggerating the sense of space around you, letting your arms help you, just a little bit. As you move from center, you're like also inclining this way.

Very, very nice movement.

The front foot's pointing forward like we did before, the back foot out, and you're just turning, and you face the other way.

So what does it mean? If the left foot is pointing forward in one direction, you're turning around the left, and then the right foot is pointing, and now you're facing the opposite direction.

And you can even use your arms to carve out the space around you.

And you can even add a little hop. So, a little hop.

Is there one direction you would want to? Your right? So when the left foot is forward, you circle around left. When the right foot is forward, you circle around right.

And then let's see if we get a good ground. If the balance is difficult, you can even drag the back leg. Drag the back leg if the balance is difficult.

But you're turning from center, and you're claiming this space around you. Your eyes help stabilize.

And then walk again, just feeling the back space is here, space around me. I'm in this territory.

Connection to myself and my world. And when you see somebody and they see you, it's possible. It lets you know that it's okay, and you're sending it to them in a way that it can be received. And having the space behind you, around you.

You have a space around you.

We're in a circle here. Big circle.

[Silence 2 minutes]

We can bring what's living in us here, in this space, into the world.

Worth us all to travel well.

Thank you.

Thank you.

We can use some help, right? Yeah, so the folding up of these guys is kind of like, what do we do? Two, and then another one, so they end up this one, okay?

Yeah.