Gestures

Angela 2 — Week 4, Day 2, Session 2 — 92 minutes

Summary: Standing gestures of ground, center, and height, then showing up, asking for help, and radiating from a larger self. Questions about direction and weight open into how energy is exchanged. Russell speaks of simple presence, and of locating the I between historical self and the living moment. The circle shares appreciations, challenges, and what wants attention next.

Standing

[Russell:] Let's begin standing together.

[Silence 41 seconds]

The ground is here.

Just bring the right foot forward, shifting. Connecting from the ground up and into the middle.

Hands, if you would like to, do that. Sense, knowing where your sacrum is in back, so you can project forward from there.

Feeling that you can move from this as a center.

Shifting of weight so that we have a good feeling of the ground, connecting to the ground.

A sense of growing from the ground up, feeling our height.

I keep finding, over and over, dealing with so many different people, different traditions, that if the thinking or even the heart energy is emphasized before there's a good ground and a center, there is often a sense of being blown out of one's experience — either lifted out or blown out of one's experience. We'll talk more about that.

This emphasis on ground, center, into our height is important. And let's let the arms live.

Stay here a little bit, feeling some giving in that right leg, where the knee has some flexibility, the ankle. Upward energy also. Radiating into the earth. Still have the up in the background.

[Silence 59 seconds]

Embodiment in ordinary life

Part of our directions — how we can have this embodiment in more and more complex situations.

At first, our practices are to restore ourselves, to get us reconnected, and that continues to be true. And what comes to the fore, as we're continuing in the last half of our program, this study together, is how our embodiment lives in ordinary situations and challenging situations. Less resolved. Feeling that.

To say presence, I could just say — something.

And in that left leg. Softening in the mouth, the eyes are up, and feeling the influence of the gesture on the inner self.

Coming back.

[Silence 2 minutes]

Showing up and asking for help

Space ourselves so we can have our left hand to the chest, right hand over, and just forward and back, feeling.

So hopefully this is still alive as a center, as a place of vibrancy, moving forward and back. And the hands here help this place to come more forward in our presence.

Always so helpful to clarify the relationship to the earth. Inhaling. Breathing here. Give in that right leg. The intention to show up for my situation.

Exhaling, lowering the head, a feeling of asking for help.

That feeling of I can't do it myself, asking for help, also reminds me of the prostration. Raising my hands often has that in it. Please help me.

Just soften in this gesture with the head down. The chest has an opportunity to yield.

[Silence 45 seconds]

Oceanic self

The gesture — it's so important that we're willing to stand in our vastness also, every day like that. We're not just tied in our images of smallness. That we're willing to stand in what I call oceanic self. But it's not personal. It's not one's historic ego. It's a willingness to drop into that larger self, unconditioned.

And so we exhale and radiate into the world. Stand, breathing, inhaling. Either sending it beyond or taking it through. Feeling that we can share in the challenges of your personal self, or any situation that you want to connect with, in your dignity, in your length, in your ground, center.

[Silence 2 minutes]

Let's come into this neighborhood for a little bit.

[Silence 2 minutes]

How the weight travels

Before we go further, just any questions, observations about the gestures, anything that wants to be asked or commented on about them. Are they living for you at all in your life?

[Participant 1:] Yes. When going forward, I always wonder, do I go to my foot or do I go forward?

[Russell:] Yeah. You see, because the weight goes from left to right.

[Participant 1:] Yes. Do I take the direction of my weight? Or do I take the direction of going forward? I can do both.

[Russell:] Yeah, so that's all standard. Let's see what we get. Let's get a collection of observations.

So in one, feel how you could emphasize a bit of a diagonal towards your right foot, or you could have the feeling that you're drawn more forward. Of course the right foot takes weight. It takes it in a slightly different way.

[Participant 1:] The other thing with balancing is more difficult for me, going forward with my right foot at a serious angle, because I'm asymmetrical as a starting position. So if I try and go forward, that's when I get a little iffy. So I tend to drift diagonally.

[Russell:] Right. Other observation?

Yeah, so say more. What do you notice? Go ahead now. Do it, so that you're with it while you're speaking.

[Participant 2:] You stick it basically to the front. You're going to go forward regardless.

[Russell:] Right.

[Participant 2:] And you're going to get your back foot for a little bit. You tend to go diagonally, then it becomes an issue.

[Russell:] I agree.

[Participant 2:] Direction of your big toe. If your toe is turned down.

[Russell:] Right.

[Participant 2:] But if your foot is almost more forward.

[Russell:] More forward, yeah, that's true. Right, so that's an important distinction.

[Participant 3:] I also notice that it depends on which part of the foot I bring the weight into. If I go a little lateral, if it's more towards the little toe. If I go too far in, then there's a balance thing that happens. But if I come a little closer to the center of the foot — not even quite the center. The fourth metatarsal. Would that be right?

[Russell:] I actually come a little more, for me, between the big toe and the next toe.

[Participant 3:] Okay. Between the big toe and the next toe. The toe next to the big toe, not the other little toe.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 3:] If my attitude is going towards, that feels solid. But if my attitude is leaning into the right foot, that feels little and teetery.

[Russell:] Nice. So something about your attitude seems important there. Can you find something about that? Is that a distinction you can sense?

[Participant 3:] Like intention, attitude? Like completeness when you're forward — it feels all inclusive. To the right feels like I'm leaving something behind, or not included.

[Participant 4:] I have a completely opposite thought. I'd much prefer the right. If I'm open in space, and then straight ahead, it feels more rigid and short, and it kind of bothers my back.

[Russell:] Yeah, that sounds right. Go ahead.

[Participant 5:] When I go forward, I'm less balanced. Feel the lift. I'm going — I don't know how to say this — beyond myself. I'm going beyond my stability. And it feels more alive.

[Russell:] Yeah. So going more to the right, you feel more stable.

Now, what happens when more consciousness is in your back foot? When you're as interested in the left foot as your right foot.

[Participant 5:] To me, that's what I'd be playing with, actually. The process of going forward is leading the back foot as you come onto the front foot, and it's how I do that that allows me to be more squarely on my front.

[Russell:] Interesting, yeah.

[Participant 5:] And then onto the top.

[Russell:] Yeah. See, I'm so grateful for my left metatarsals. The left front of my foot, beneath the toes — those bones, the metatarsals, and the left toes — and what they have to do with creating a larger support, connected to my right foot also.

See if that, even with the foot not so in front.

So, just to throw out a few things there. The narrower your stance, as was said, it is easy to go forward. I would suggest the narrower your stance, the less stable, the more mobile you're gonna feel. If it's really wide, you're gonna have to go quite a bit over.

I wonder if there's a place where it's wide enough — it has something to do with the width of your shoulders and pelvis — where you have enough stability from underneath. Where the back foot is quite conscious, so you're not relying just on coming onto this right foot. If the back foot is conscious, then it's like there's a tether pulling you more to the middle.

You feel that? It's interesting, isn't it? That we can actually go forward, have a little bit of rightness, because we are at an angle. But there's something about that back foot.

[Participant 6:] Isn't this very similar to walking meditation? The way we walk in the meditation.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 6:] The elevation as well.

[Russell:] The down and the up, yeah. Were you coming up with something there?

[Participant 7:] Yeah, but I was going to move away from the physicality of it.

[Russell:] Good, go ahead.

[Participant 7:] To me, we have incorporated this as part of our daily practice. The focus is on energy transfer, because we did it after looking at the three dimensions of energy.

So to me, there's a problem in myself when I'm on the shore, when I'm not the ocean. And so the movement is receiving the energy, the larger. The movement this way is to share what energy I have into the larger energy.

[Russell:] Yes, yes. Nice.

[Participant 7:] And when we reverse it, in the ocean, then that part of me which is the larger universe is extending the energy out to the person, and coming back. I hardly even understand it, but then — extending from universal energy to this other being. And when I'm coming back, the head is not down. It's almost an acknowledgment of the unity of what's going on. So to me, I don't even think about the physicality. It's all the energy.

[Russell:] Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful. Thank you.

Yeah, the energy is so key. What these gestures are inviting in us as an exchange with the world.

And you're still wondering about that, with the left foot forward, and you're the ocean coming back. Something about that — yeah, that's a good one. We'll go deeper with that, I hope.

An asymmetrical base

[Participant 8:] And I noticed that when I'm standing with my feet together, my navel and my shoulders are square. When I bring my foot forward, my navel begins to just slightly come off of being centered. So then there's a difference, when I move forward, if I'm moving forward with navel and shoulders in that direction, or if I bring myself back to center.

[Russell:] Right. I'm gonna suggest for your practice that you find out how you can actually have this asymmetrical base with a more symmetrical center. It won't be one hundred percent, but in that direction.

You know, there's a way in which if I just let myself organize over this asymmetrical pelvis, I would be facing this way. And by settling into this back foot and this front foot together, I can have more of a forward location.

[Participant 9:] I just want to mention the inner life, the center, and the pelvis here. And the pelvic floor, really. It feels like there's a lot of mobility there.

[Russell:] Say it again.

[Participant 9:] The pelvis —

[Russell:] So, how much forward you go?

[Participant 9:] How much forward, right. Because when I go more forward, I can't really be on my foot. If I stay in the middle, I don't go as far forward. So I have to negotiate this. How much I go.

[Russell:] That's right.

[Participant 10:] I just want to say, Aurora, my granddaughter, is learning to walk. So all day long she does this. It's like she's checking out that bigger space.

[Russell:] That's right.

[Participant 10:] And then she pats. And then she goes up the stairs, she's patting, and then back here. If she's surfing on furniture, she's always patting the space in front, kind of moving into the whole of it. And then comes back this way.

[Russell:] Yeah. So that's beautiful.

Okay, let's come back. Thank you.

How simple it is

But I've noticed this morning there's so much living in me, wanting to share, and wanting us to have the opportunities to connect together. And so there's a lot of excitement.

And the first thing I want to share with you is, I'm in a kind of glow about this last weekend. I had a seminar, a retreat at Santa Sabina, and it was very, very deep and meaningful. And one of the things that was a new gift is the two nuns who direct the center did the retreat, and were really taken with it. Really taken with it.

Now, one of them was saying, I've loved God for fifty years, and this is the first time I felt that in my body.

And so I'm saying that as — it's not something that I personally did. It was that they had the experience of what we're learning about. About going in and finding out that it's real in there. And that the body's not just the body in the way we've been taught the body, but it's actually our living experience.

And then that was followed by, two days later, this last Tuesday. I was invited — there's an annual meeting of the directors of the retreat centers connected to Santa Sabina. So there were about twenty priests and nuns coming in. Three priests, about twelve or thirteen nuns, then some administration. They're top administrators.

So I was invited by Sister Margaret to lead the first three hours, to get them into connection with themselves and connection with each other, and to what they were doing there.

Again, it was such — I don't even know why. I have so many moving experiences with people, but something about these are very, very dedicated people, really giving their life.

I had them start with grounding. Ground, sound, breath. Connecting to themselves, and reflecting on a moment in the last months, or a year, at their center that has really touched them. And they didn't know each other, so they would introduce themselves and bring that moment forward.

And it was amazing — and it's not amazing to you all, but amazing to them — to realize that really listening to each other, and connecting to their own places of being touched, it's like everyone was sharing this deep well of experience.

One man runs retreats for what they call the homeboys and homegirls. These are young folks leaving gangs, teaching them skills, trying to give them another life. And so he's sitting there, Father Tom, and he's sitting with a guy who said every inch, every millimeter of his skull, including the inside of his ears, was tattooed. His shaved head, every bit. And he's describing how difficult it was at first to be in conversation. Then he said, and then I realized, as we were eating dessert, that I didn't see the tattoos anymore. That I just saw him.

And it's like we all got — and hopefully it keeps going on — we all got how immediately we form impressions of everybody. Part of our brain does that. Not a bad thing. It's just where we're going to place that in our calibration of life.

But just the gift of, even in such an extreme case, all of that can melt away when human hearts meet.

And so each one had a little gift to give that was like that.

And so then we went into the large room and led them through some movements. And they're not used to going into their bodies so much. They've been given a story about, in some sense, the body being the enemy to them and to their teaching.

And yet, simple, just breathing, connecting to the ground, they were appreciating, kind of letting go. They could feel the animal traveling and settling down.

And then I invited them to think of some way — part of the purpose I was given by Sister Margaret was to help them, because all these people are burnt out from all the work they're doing, how they can nourish themselves and be in better self-connection.

So I said, think of something that you do during the day, a little something that gives you sustenance, that touches you. And then another process of, think of something that you do occasionally and wish you did more often.

Then we got them into the groups of three, like you all have done a lot, and had them, in present tense language — which is a real key if you're running processes like this — give the moment in sensory rich language. And I needed to model it, because most people, it's alien to speak from in there. It's a little embarrassing at first to be so exposed, in a way.

But they loved it, because they started to feel how they could have the moment now.

And then how the other two were saying — Father Ronan was saying, I was with Christina walking down the path, and I could see the flowers that she was seeing, and it was like a revelation. That human beings connecting in presence with each other like that can have such sustenance, and such uplift, and such really deep connecting.

And I guess one of the things I said to Valerie the next day, when I came in the office, and I was just so touched — it's so simple. It's so simple. I want people to understand how simple it is, although it takes some courage to stand for what's living.

It's actually very simple. But that's what we're learning to do, is to stand up for life, stand up for how it's living in there.

And of course, every one of us finds that challenging every day in our own experience. Something in us wants to cut off from the direct connecting to the living.

But if we practice that, we can stand up for that, and we can invite people and give them simple ways of feeling how alive it is in there.

And again, it affirmed for me that even people who are not only not so conscious in their bodies, but actually are given a teaching that takes them a bit away from it — how it's not far away.

Notice what you're feeling in your chest, and giving some examples so they know what I mean. They need that.

So I realize I'm very alive with that, and inspired, for those of you who are wanting to share the work, to get an impression of — it's not complex. It's being willing to go deeper with the simple.

Where we locate the I

So that's also what I'm hoping to help us go further with. And there's another way I want to say that.

I was speaking to it in the meditation this morning. And we need to approach it from many different sides. And it's not new. It's something that we've been with before. But it's really emphasized right now for me, in this next phase of our working.

Where do we locate the I?

There is always the historical self that's got its patterns of thought, feeling, and sensing. And there's the living moment.

And it's not that that's two worlds. But it's also not just one world. So I'm gonna confuse you a little bit now, but we'll have time to work it out.

So it's not two, and it's not one.

The main point about that that I'm wanting to make right now, as I started to in sitting this morning, is: always, in a moment of presence, awareness is always available. Right there. When we're not conscious, it's not far away. It's right there, ready to come forward.

And if we don't take responsibility for our attention — which is what invites the awareness forward — if we don't take responsibility for our attention, our habits of attention will take over. Something's got to direct the show. And we will attend in some way.

And mostly our attention will be to confirm our story about ourself and about life. So we will keep repeating it.

And yet, not at all far away, right next to that, right in it, behind it, around it, is us in that free state of being that is alive in this moment, awake to what's happening, able to — even in a moment of great challenge — be not necessarily happy, but free, and authentically connected to the moment, and not bound by one's past responses. Not bound in our reactivity.

It doesn't mean our past is gone. But there is literally the opportunity for freedom right there.

And these — I'm gonna say two states, but I don't really mean it. I don't know how to say it otherwise. These two states. There's this historic state that's trying to keep reaffirming itself. Not our enemy. It's just not who we are. It just keeps coming forward with its stories, trying to locate, trying to figure everything out.

And again, as we said before, when that is in service to the being — wonderful, needed, essential. But when this thinks it's you, or when you think you're it, it's a tight shoe. And it doesn't matter how good it gets, it always feels like a tight shoe. I mean, for moments it won't.

[Participant 11:] I was looking, and just realized that there are so many senses of my historical self. There's the one that tells all the story, on and on. And then there's the one that pays bills and figures out what to do. Responds to requests, and all that. And I'm thinking there's only one presence. Just the first time I ever thought about that. I think of the historical self, and I always think of that troublemaker. But there's the other part too.

[Russell:] Right. It seems important to bring presence to what I would call the productive part of the historical self too. And presence to the part that's confused.

There's a lot of air. A lot of air around us. It doesn't feel like it's too much air, right? So yeah, there's a lot of presence, but there's no gap. It is exciting.

And as you're pointing out — then, do we need this sense that those historic functional aspects are absolutely essential, and we can learn from the places that feel not so functional, not so helpful. They've been functional in the past, or they've been helpful in the past.

And see, it gets so tricky to try to define it. So in general, I think of three kinds of thought, which is like three kinds of mind, or three kinds of historic self.

So there's the functional. Pay the bills, get here at 9:30. And we want that. If that's not functioning well, chances are — unless you're a sadhu in India living in a garbage pile and finding it just as good as the Taj Mahal — chances are you want that functional self working.

So there's a functional self. Then there's also this incredible part of the human being, creative thought, where you're gonna bring something that no one else can bring. And we each gift this world, and that is connected to our history. That's connected to the struggles and the wounds and the genetics and the gifts, and all of that. As that gets more and more liberated from the quicksand of our history, it actually is part of our gift.

So we have the functional aspects, we have the creative aspects — functional thought, creative thought — and then the habitual. The stuff that we can call dysfunctional, or less helpful. The repetitive stories. The space needs to be filled with something, it thinks, because it gets really scared when it gets too empty. So it tends to fill it with old stuff, familiar stuff. Right?

But as you're saying, there's the presence that can see all of that.

Now, what we want to be very conscious of — and again, I'm kind of planting seeds. Some of this is just too much for a first morning, but I just kind of want to throw these out there.

As soon as the awareness blossoms and the presence is there, there's a part of the mind that wants to take ownership of that. That wants to call that, oh yeah, I'm really aware now. And that's the same part that goes, oh, you stupid jerk, you're not aware. Right? And then it does its back and forth thing, building you up, taking you down, building you up, taking you down.

It's no place to live. So we need to see that whole mechanism.

[Silence 59 seconds]

[Participant 5:] In which that self is operative. In which I'm challenged to be truthful, and not to operate from the lie of that self. The assembling of that, the cowardice of that self.

And then there are awarenesses that are so innocent, and joyful, just innocent of that.

And so I guess my question is, life seems to bring us into these situations where we're shown the conditional stuff.

[Russell:] Yeah. Isn't it great?

And oh, it is so helpful. It's exactly there that our — it's too big a word, because we all — I don't know how to say it otherwise. It's right there that our liberation takes place. That we're not bound. And the awareness is right there, ready to see it.

That's where — great gratitude to Dogen Zenji, an important teacher for me, from the tradition of Zen that I studied in mostly, where he so emphasized: samsara, confusion, everyday life diffi-

culties, is not separate from nirvana, from freedom. And in fact, that's how it's revealed. That's how it's revealed.

But hold that question one second. Just one second, hold it. Let's pause a minute. There's so much happening. I don't want this to become just heady stuff. It takes a minute to drop down.

We're literally saying that ordinary people like you and me can have our history in life-giving ways.

And that part of us that feels like, well, that's impossible maybe, or it's too much — we're just asking that to hold it as a question. Maybe, for an ordinary person like me who's not going to be in a monastery, and is living a regular life, maybe this quality of free awareness, this presence, can actually be functioning. Most of the time. And when it's not, it's not far away.

That's what we're proposing, out of all of what we're saying right now. And that's a big proposition that needs some moments to sit with.

[Silence 2 minutes]

Of course, a big part of our task is relating to danger in skillful ways. So much of our confusion comes from trying to relate to dangerous situations in ways that were too overwhelming.

[Participant 12:] I think the haiku of that question is: so if this quality of free awareness is available, how does one sustain being in it?

I think I can act. I know I can act. But it's very fleeting. And so in situations that are demanding, or inviting us to really glow in that space, I'm not very skillful.

Not that you have the answer, but I'm curious how — because I made an effort to make it happen. It's not the right answer. It doesn't work.

[Russell:] Right. Exactly.

[Participant 12:] It's really my challenge, particularly this session. Sustaining, and staying in that in a way that's free and not forced.

[Russell:] Yeah. Beautiful. Yes, perfect.

A moment to sense

So let's take a moment. Just close your eyes.

This is bringing us to, I think, an important way to reflect right now.

Just take a moment to feel your bottom, to settle down here. Through your legs, into your hands.

And as you sense that you're here, you're on this spot. Free of the stories, letting them go in the background. You're here on this spot.

And the sounds are part of this being on this spot, cause you're also in this larger space.

Your moment's alive. Breathing is here. It means literally to sense this breath.

And all of that can live together — sound, ground, breath.

Is that true, that all of that can live together? And then, can that live together with less and less effort?

You're resting here, and it comes to you. You're not resting like sleepy. You're open, but you don't need to struggle to find your breath, or find the ground, find the sound.

From this state, invite a reflection of how your embodied practices, how your learning, your presencing — what you've been appreciating in your living that seems connected to all that.

And see what comes. It may come as a surprise. You might not have had that come up before, or it might be something that you've already thought.

Something you're appreciating in your embodiment, or presencing, or awakening.

And we can also be inviting the challenges, the edges.

Out of the appreciations and the challenges, also look at your sense of the next, or your hopes for our time, or what's wanting more attention. And just ask it very innocently in there. I'm sure you have ideas already, but let it come fresh. It may confirm something already known, or it may be new.

[Silence 39 seconds]

As you come back, sensing here — this spot, in this space — and keep your eyes open.

Each voice

And I want to spend some time bringing actually each voice into the room. I'd like to hear something. If you don't have much you want to say, that's okay. But it might be around these subjects of appreciations, challenges, and nexts, or it might be something else that wants to be said.

And we'll have some people speak, and then we'll probably take a little pause, do some movement, and we'll have some more people speak, so it doesn't go too long.

But as we're listening, it's the practice of embodied listening, of course. That as much as we can, we're not rehearsing what we're going to say. That we can really take our time. Something will come. And that when you're listening, you can really receive the gift of what this person is offering.

And two things happen when we listen like that. Or, I don't know if it's two, maybe it's a hundred, but I'm thinking of two right now. Why do I want to limit it like that? I don't know.

Two things that happen. Our listening helps the person speaking. Living in a field of receptivity, it goes deeper in that system.

Second thing is, when we're really listening, the places in us that resonate with what's being said get that. Right? Our brains actually model on each other in that way. And amazingly, it can filter out the stuff that doesn't resonate, without any effort, and take in that which is important.

And so this is a very important practice. Very important practice.

[Participant 13:] And in that moment, it was interesting. When that question was raised, I felt, yeah, that is the question. And then when I went inside, it became clear that for me, how I am working with sustaining presence is attention to whatever is showing up, with loving kindness. And the

thing that pulls me out of presence is anxiety, fear, judgment — whatever it is that comes in and contracts me.

So I've really been working, moment to moment in my life, trying to catch that state where it takes me over, and do what we've learned here. Just bringing that loving awareness. So for me, it's been moment to moment.

And I want to use the word generosity towards myself. A sense of generosity towards everything that's arising in me, and that that then gives me more time in presence.

But it was interesting. When he spoke, I immediately went into, yeah, I have no idea how to stay present — until I got quiet, and I said, no, I have a way. And it seems like in my life, I'm sustaining presence for longer periods of time, I think.

[Russell:] Yeah, yeah. Beautiful.

And when you're done, give us a bow, so we know. You can take plenty of time. You can have pauses.

Yeah. I want a moment with that. The word generosity really went through.

And when you said, I think I'm sustaining it longer — but it's really like that. It's mostly we get confirmed that somebody else sees it.

It's like that quote I think I gave you from Suzuki Roshi. It's like walking through a mist. You get soaked, and you don't know you're getting wet. And it's like, how do you know you're more present, because your presence is growing in itself.

We can have little inklings at times that, well, yeah, I do feel more. And sometimes it dawns on you. But in the process, it's often like, oh yeah, I'm just not riddled with those kinds of thoughts anymore. Oh, when did that happen? How long's that been going on?

[Participant 14:] Well, I just want to start with how grateful I am to be here, and how the timing of this is so perfect.

So I went and had my annual mammogram a little while ago, and it turns out that I have a little spot of breast cancer.

And so, just logistically, it's not very big. The mammogram did its job, which is to catch it early, and I do have to go through it. I have a couple of choices. I can either have a lumpectomy and some radiation, or a mastectomy. And those are my choices, which I feel grateful that I have. Some people don't.

I'm doing pretty well with the whole thing. It's actually, in more ways than I can even describe, been a huge gift in my life.

And there's a couple of things that I need to say. One of them is, in the process of moving through this, I did have a focusing session, where I was inside, that was very chaotic for me. Overwhelming, lots of stuff going on in there. And after that focusing session, I sort of shut down, and I didn't go back in, and haven't gone back in since.

And I know that I really want to do that. I really want to be able to check in. But I know that it might spill out. I have a fear — whether it's true or not, I don't know — I might spill out in a

volcanic eruption. Like there's so much that comes out too fast. I have that concern around the way that what's going on in there might come out.

So I wanted to tell everybody, so that everybody knows, and I'm not going to say it over and over again. Also, that I have a concern for other people, and that during the processes that we're doing here, it might be big for me. And so if you're not willing to do big with me, maybe you ought not to partner up with me today, or during this time.

And so that feels good, because that's been a bit of a concern about coming here for me. Other people.

When I first found out that I was gonna have to go back, and they were gonna have another look, there was a part of me that almost already knew that there was something going on. And that not knowing was really probably the hardest part. There were eight days of not knowing what was going on. That was probably the hardest part.

So my first reaction is, I thought I had forty years to live. I thought at least forty more years were ahead of me. What if I don't have a year? What do I know, when it's time to move on?

So I asked myself this question. Am I living my life in a way that I'm happy with?

And the answer was mostly yes. What a gift that was.

But what I saw was that this work that I feel really passionate about wants to come forward through me, and I am hesitating and holding back and afraid, and not really sure to go forward. And if I only have a year — which I'm not saying I only have a year. I'm going to move through this and get on with my life. But if I did only have a year, at the rate I'm going, I wouldn't be able to touch as many people as I have in my heart that I want to touch.

So that was an awareness for me, of my hesitancy, my holding back.

And also, the other awareness is that I'm so busy with everything in my life that the connections I have with people kind of get put on the back burner. And when it comes right down to it, connection with other people is such a living part of my life. It's so fulfilling, and it's so what life's about, for me. The connection with other people.

So, moving forward from there. I just had an experience with Russell. It was a workshop, and I was sharing something. And when I start to share passionately, it just comes bubbling out of me, like a river rushing forward. And I started to share, and he said, hold on, let's just sit there with this for a second.

And so that pausing is hard for me to do when I'm in that state. It's sort of hard to go, okay, hold on, let this come out in a way where it feels like it's coming from my physical body, not just my head.

I have been recording my doctor's appointments. I went back on my iPad, put the video camera on, recorded the doctor's call. I went back, watching, listening, trying to get more information, or remember what the doctor had said. And I noticed, as I was watching, that I'm talking over the doctor. He's trying to talk, and I've got a question, and I'm jumping in, and I'm not listening to what he's saying. And I went, man, I hate it when people do that. I can't believe that was actually something that I do.

It really connected to that pause. Am I listening to other people, or am I just trying to find that little spot, that little space where I can jump in and say what's going on in my head?

Wow. Really, that whole awareness, brought forward by the opportunity to record my doctor's appointment because I had some cancer, was just that, what you were talking about. God coming forward in a way that is like, wow.

And since then, it really has — I don't know how well I'm doing, because I can't always be in awareness of that. This historical quicksand pulls me down. But being aware of that, and more often stopping myself from jumping in to try to make sure that somebody hears what I have to say, has been a gift.

And the practice of going back in my day and going, that touched me. I love that practice of gratitude. What is it today that touched me?

In this desire to connect with people, I have found — and this has been not the first experience, but in a deeper way — rather than at the end of my day going back and going, oh my, that touched me, but in the moment that someone touched me, able to go, that touched me so much. Because people are reaching out in ways that really touch me. And to be able to live that gratitude of being touched as it's happening, and not as recalling it and trying to grow it, but it's happening in my experience.

Wow. So powerful.

And I'm just so grateful to this work. I don't see the change so much. I mean, I notice it in these ways, but people are noticing, oh, you're so different. And I'm like, that's good, because I don't always feel it as I'm managing through it, but I think it's happening more and more. More and more often.

I love how you described this morning that the bubble breaks and we fall into presence, and how thin it is. How thin the veil between the thought and the presence is. It was beautiful when you said that this morning.

So there's a lot going on. I feel like I'm gonna burst into tears any second. And I feel so grateful that my life is — here I am in this place where I can really deeply process what's happening to me.

And the fears that I have about the treatment options. One of the fears is that this idea of radiation has seemed so poisonous. Like I would avoid that at all costs. But as I start to talk to people about it and get more ideas, that whole veil of the story of how awful that is — it's like, oh, wait a minute. I don't know if that's true or not. Maybe it isn't that awful.

Can I make it not be so awful? Can I make it be a spiritual experience? Can I make it be a warrior of radiation coming to save my life? Can I make it be that?

I think getting through this with grace and compassion would be my biggest desire.

I know that in my experience, when someone's struggling with their health, people have a tendency to want to do something. What can I do? Can I help you?

Yes, you can help me. Hold me in whatever healing space that you have in your heart, in your presence. That will help me.

[Russell:] It was so graced by your presence.

Got one thing to say. Just let the place that's scared about crying too much, or being too much, know that she's welcome if she wants to come. That she's not an alien to the feeling of grace.

Let's hear from one more person, and then we'll take a little pause.

Yes, please. Say it again.

[Participant 15:] I could. Maybe I should think more about this. Not all the time.

[Russell:] Okay.

[Participant 15:] So when that was being spoken, I was thinking of the old historical self, and just how much I love my creative self. And how much I've worked so hard there, and it's so gratifying, being with people I work with. And I can do so much there, and I can get so caught there.

And so it reminded me of Aurora. Being in that space — even though I'm co-presencing, and I am present in that creative self, I just take so much of the light in the work that I do. But then it becomes a trap.

So it's like this, and then I have to, because it would be like a horror that I don't watch. That would be silly. But sometimes I hide there. But I love it.

[Russell:] So you really love that creative space, and sometimes you get caught. And is there a particular wanting about that, or are you just noticing that?

[Participant 15:] There's a reward, and there's a dysfunction that comes with that, right? I love that. And then I'm tired, and I complain about being tired.

[Russell:] That's good thinking. That's not unhealthy.

So there's something about wanting more expression for your creative self, that feels more in harmony? Something in that direction?

[Participant 15:] It's moving out, right? Into more — not to be stuck in such a small space. It does become small. But it's so safe, and it's so delightful.

But the only way out is to be more present and more expansive, and to go into more of what is unseen, unknown. Even alone, I can be in that, and be present. But there needs to be a bigger step.

[Russell:] Okay, so let's see if I got this, because that's a new one for me.

So you're sensing this creative energy that you love, yet that feels in a way like it's in a smaller known space. You've been doing it a long time. You've got all that. And there's something that's wanting all that, and wanting to step forward into an unknown place.

Yeah. So just a natural feel of that. I'll be very curious to hear.

You do that — I think of LeBron dribbling around. So that's great. That's such a beautiful gesture.

Well, yeah. But as you may know about me already, I trust gestures so much. And that this resonates so much for you. I know that your inner life has more that it wants you to get about this, and I'm real curious about how that comes.

Great. Thank you.

Teaching tips

So we're gonna take a pee break, a tea break, and then we're gonna come back and I wanna do some movement together. Would you like to say something about the sheet of paper that's up there? Or not. You don't have to.

[Participant 16:] I've been thinking about how I would be more explicit in how to bring this work, integrate this work, into my practice and work with other people. And wanting to capture the little teaching tips that come out of Russell's mouth, and get them more highlighted for myself. And then I thought maybe others would be interested in that as well. And that maybe we could all, if we hear a kind of teaching tip that talks about how Russell goes about it, or what's behind his thinking and his teaching, when this actually comes out, that we capture it on our notepads and then write it up.

And then that gives Russell a chance to check what we're receiving.

I was kind of mindful of the fact that there is this one human being who's imparting this information, and that one human being only has a certain amount of time in their life. And so maybe with this part of our training, we can also contribute to compiling the actual teaching instructions. So it's just an idea.

So that's a place for us all to visit, and to put down anything you feel has emerged that would be useful for yourself and everybody to just capture and check.

[Russell:] Beautiful. Yeah, I think it's an exciting idea.

I'd like to put out, a gem might come from someone else. So it doesn't have to be from my mouth. That's one thing that I think of.

And the other is, sometime when an image resonates — like for some people, the bubble. I've heard from people, like that. So you can just even put down bubble, versus something that, for your own inner life — but maybe you're offering a meditation group, and you resonate with that image, and remembering that word would help your students. You know what I mean?

So that we can grow the metaphors, images, teachings that are touching for our own practice, and for offering to others.

So I really like that idea. Collective working. So I guess there are pens up there, and feel free to put anything down. It can be a word, it can be a sentence, it can be a few words.

Yeah, I like it so much. There's a group in Europe that does that. I'll show you some of the things that they've come up with. The ZIST group. Martin started that in the group. So that would be kind of interesting to have.

Great. Thank you.

Okay, let's take fifteen minutes, and then we'll come back and do some movement together. Let's move the chairs out, and you'll need mats.