Movement lesson

Angela 2 — Week 5, Day 2, Session 4 — 45 minutes

Summary: After sensing inner rhythm, four-phase breathing is timed with lifting a foot and pushing off the floor, the head and pelvis moving together. Attention stays on initiation, pause, and flow. Both sides are explored, then both feet and a pelvic lift, before standing, a few steps, and a short sharing.

Inner rhythm

[Russell:] And so, feeling from that work outside, just feel the rhythm inside.

The rhythm of your breath is one example of rhythm. There is inner pace or quality. You might feel it in your heart — you might feel it, meaning in your pulse — you might feel it elsewhere.

The rhythm of your thoughts.

Lifting the foot

Please bend both legs.

And we're gonna connect the four-phase breathing to a variety of movements.

So, entering the movements with subtlety, with really listening to the changes throughout your body as you initiate any of these movements.

So, your legs are bent, and with the inhale, let your right foot lift a little off the floor. You pause with the foot in the air, and then you exhale, lowering the foot, and you pause.

And you can pause for a distinct pause related to that breath. You could also take a couple of breaths if you wanted to, so it doesn't have to be one movement after another. But you have a clear four-phase, and then if you want to breathe a few times before the next, you can do that.

Connect the lifting to an inhale, this moment of pausing where you're scanning through your body, sensing, and then sensing how the letting go of the breath and the letting down of the leg are connected, feeling the ground.

[Silence 34 seconds]

And as you're doing that, let your head roll to the right. So you're still with your breath, but now you're also attending throughout your body to the lifting of the leg and the turning of the head.

With the head, come back to neutral as the foot comes to the ground. So there's a sense of timing from foot to head. That's somehow being tracked through your whole body.

You get different parts of your brain involved when we get into the timing of the moves.

And notice, in the moment of lifting, what happens to your lower back, to your pelvis. This simple movement provides a lot of information for your brain, and how you organize the lifting of the leg, the flexing for walking.

Okay, and pause for a moment. Pause with all that. If you want to lengthen your legs, that's fine.

Pushing off

And bend both legs. Have space between your feet, not too close together, something like the width of your pelvis or even wider.

And this time, inhaling, feel how you can push off the right foot and turn your pelvis towards the left. Inhaling, pausing, and again, during the pause, your attention is gently, actively scanning through, coming back to the beginning position with the exhale and pausing.

You're pushing off the floor with your right foot. You're not lifting it now. It's a different movement. So you're pushing off the floor, and the right side of the pelvis comes away from the floor.

The right knee stays vertical, so the knee's not dropping down. The left knee might move a little bit in space, but it's not just dropping down.

And let your head go to the left, inhaling, pausing, exhaling as you come back to neutral, and pausing.

It's a movement you're familiar with, so we wanna go into more precision of timing, of being able to be with the four phases.

How do you initiate the exhale after you've been holding the breath? Is it a sudden jump? Or the inhale? Can there be a sense of flow?

Those are the key points when you come out of a pause. Is it a lurching of the diaphragm? Or is it like a swimming of the diaphragm, a movement, a flow? Like a breeze, or like moving through water.

The head will go left as you push off the right foot and the pelvis goes left. And you're finding your own timing for how long the pauses can be, want to be. You can vary it.

So when you push off that foot, the right side of the pelvis lifts, and the head rolls leftward. That's it.

Then pause once again, and sense, and lower the legs if you like.

During the pauses, you don't need to maintain the four-phase breathing. It might spontaneously — or it might shift. You're allowing, and your attention is just noticing, but not controlling.

[Silence 58 seconds]

Alternating

In both legs, and this time alternate lifting the right foot, head going to the right, with the four-phase, back to neutral, and then pushing off the foot, letting the head go to the left.

Let that — so it's two cycles of four-phase breathing to go through the whole pattern.

And listen to the movements through your pelvis as you lift and push.

In a very simple yet deeply profound way, you're moving through some of the key movements, through your psoas, through deep in your pelvis, through what it's like to walk, to lift your leg, to push off your foot.

And get more and more subtle in the effort that you use for lifting, for pushing, more and more sense of flow in the phases of breath, and in the initiation of the movement.

Have a real sense that you're pushing off that foot. You're not just rolling the pelvis from the middle. You're really getting a push when you're pushing. So we want that connection to the ground there.

Okay, and then maybe pause once again. And again, I'm using the word pause there. I don't mean the same as with your breathing. You're letting your breathing just be natural now.

[Silence 52 seconds]

Listen to the sense of your whole back on the floor. How the two sides have some differences.

Head the other way

Bend your legs. And this time, as you lift your right foot off the floor, have your head go to the left. Just try that a few times. Feel that pattern.

And again, notice if that can be harmonious, not a separate thought — oh, turn head, lift foot — but if you can create some sense of linkage, of pattern.

The timing. The initiation especially. The initiation and endings are the places where we can see the abruptness, or the degree of integration, of the movement.

Pause with your legs bent.

First, when I say — pause the movement. You know, if you're in an investigation that is rich, go, keep going. Ignoring me is a good idea. But if it's approximately complete, then stop. If you feel finished before I say pause, you want to listen to that.

And push off your right foot, turning your head to the right. So the pelvis turns to the left and the head goes to the right. You're pushing off the right foot. You're tracking that with the four-phase breathing from foot to head,

[Silence 30 seconds]

deep in your spine and pelvis. There's so much that can be sensed there.

Go back and forth between the lifting of the foot, with the head turning left, and the pressing of the foot, with the head going right and the pelvis going left.

[Silence 30 seconds]

Some kind of image of where is that hip joint, your sacrum. And does the lumbar spine come into the pelvis?

And you feel satisfied, you let that stop, and you listen to what's happening.

[Silence 44 seconds]

And then let's all stop for a little bit, just to pause with that and continue.

[Silence 2 minutes]

The left side

Bend both legs. Sense each foot on the floor. Notice the qualities of each leg.

[Silence 43 seconds]

And just tune into your left leg. Feel how your left leg is alive in your perception, how you know it's there.

Travel through the left leg, feeling the contact of the foot and the floor, any signs of vitality, aliveness in the leg, all the way through to the hip and how the left hip comes to the pelvis.

And just feel the very beginnings of lifting that foot from the floor. The very, very initial thought into the preparatory movement, to all that occurs before that foot lifts. Have that all connected to inhaling.

And then, as the foot just comes off the ground, you begin your pause. And then as you come back down, you're exhaling.

And you're listening to how that hip joint, how that sacrum, the whole back of your pelvis, shifts at that moment in the preparatory movement, and then again at the moment of lifting. There's a process of preparing and then going into.

And let the head go to the left as you lift the left foot. The head go leftward as you lift. Yes.

And then, as you keep the foot on the floor — and let's do the opposite — so you push off the foot, the head will go to the right, inhaling connected to that action. So now the foot stays on the floor, and you'll push off and let the left side of the pelvis lift.

And again, pay attention to the timing of the head and the pelvis, so your attention is tracking all the way through and is connected to breath.

Now we're pushing off the left foot. The left foot's on the floor, and you're lifting the left side of the pelvis, and the head goes to the right. Head goes right. So the head's going in the same direction the pelvis is going.

And then go back and forth between lifting the foot and having the head go leftward, and then pressing the foot and having the head go rightward. So it's two four-phase breaths through that whole pattern.

[Silence 53 seconds]

Good. Okay, and pause, lower your legs.

[Silence 2 minutes]

Smoother initiation

Bend both legs. No. Lift the left foot, turn the head to the right. Lower the foot and push off the foot and turn the head to the left. And find that just completely smoothly.

Feeling especially the initiations and completions. How you lift — is there a moment of sudden jump? How you initiate the push.

It's those moments that we can transform the pattern of innervation. The way the movement starts and stops are the key points. As that gets smoother, the movement gets more integrated.

So we want to get more and more subtle with how we lift, and we can still — some of you are still jumping through that lift point. You can get more subtle with the initiation.

[Silence 37 seconds]

Press and lift

Let's add one more thing. As you press off one foot, lift the other foot.

Okay, so let that become one action. So the lifting and the pressing are connected.

And let's return to the head moving more congruously, which means when the left foot presses, the head goes to the right. When the right foot presses, the head goes to the left.

You can just lift the foot a little bit. But it's actually coming away from the floor as you press the other foot. It's real activation. It's a complex movement through your pelvis.

But again, it's a movement related to walking. It's a movement related to how we have to mobilize ourselves in life, and really organizing deep in the pelvis or back.

And it's okay. Let that pause. Enjoy your life. Lord. Wonderful, wonderful.

[Silence 37 seconds]

Both feet

Bend both legs. Listen well to this next instruction.

So, I'm gonna be inhaling, but really thinking down into your pelvis with the inhale, 'cause you're gonna be lifting both feet. And that movement of breath down is very helpful for supporting deeply into your back.

Okay, so go slow. Go slow. Without that support, your pelvis will tend to roll forward, which might be fine for you. It's also somewhat vulnerable. But if you have that fullness of breath downward, that will give an inner support, like a pressure from the inside.

Yeah. Yes.

You're lifting both feet, but the lifting of the feet is again connected to an inhale, but now I'm emphasizing that your inhale have the sense of really down toward your pelvis, including your lower back and the back of your pelvis, so you can get an inner support from the breath. It's almost like the breath pushes down and helps the feet to lift.

Pause for a moment there.

This time, inhaling, push both feet into the floor and lift your pelvis. So feel that pattern, how you can have the four-phase breathing connected to lifting. Pausing, smoothly lowering.

Now, smoothly means both the movement and the exhale. So now you're pushing the floor. We'll come back to the lifting later, but for now, you're pushing the floor with your feet, lifting your pelvis. Pausing, lowering, exhaling, and pausing.

So the attentional demands quite a bit, because you're tracking the smoothness of the breath and the smoothness of the movement at the same time.

And now go back and forth between lifting the feet, inhaling. Again, listen to how you leave the floor. Can it get more and more subtle till it feels like it's a sense of continuity, that you can't sense a jump in the moment of coming away from the floor. Just as you don't sense a jump in the initiation of the inhale.

[Silence 39 seconds]

And when you feel complete, just lower down. If you'd like to do a few more movements, go ahead.

[Silence 58 seconds]

Let's let that rest for now. Feel the sense through your whole body.

One last time

And bend your legs. And just one last time, we're going to vary. Lifting one foot, pushing off of the other.

So do the — not the two-legged together — the one-legged. So one foot lifts a bit as the one foot presses.

When your left foot presses, the left side of the pelvis lifts a bit. When the right foot presses, the right side lifts a bit.

And just let your head move as it wants to. And you're in the four-phase breathing.

And just as, again, this is kind of the culmination, that you can sense through your whole body, from foot to head, the harmony of movement and breath.

[Silence 37 seconds]

Okay, let that pause.

[Silence 60 seconds]

Standing

And when you feel ready, come all the way up to standing.

What gets your interest — your standing, and your breathing, and your sense of yourself — and as you attune to that, and as you connect with that, when you feel ready, just take a few steps and see if there's anything interesting for you, and where your legs are moving.

Sharing

And if you have something that you want to articulate, great to hear.

[Participant:] Alignment.

[Russell:] Do you have any sense of what feels more aligned that didn't before? Do you have a feeling of that?

[Participant:] The shoulder down through the leg. More length.

[Russell:] More length.

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] Yeah, and can you feel how when you put your weight on your leg, how you come out of your hip?

[Participant:] Sure. Fluidity?

[Russell:] Say it again.

[Participant:] Fluidity?

[Russell:] Fluidity, yeah. In my country, we'd say fluidity.

Okay, so I think we'll end for the morning here. I think we've got about eight or nine minutes till lunch. Thank you. We'll continue.

[Participant:] What time do we continue? 3:30?

[Russell:] 3, is it 3 or 3:30? 3:30, I think, yeah. And my meetings are — if you walk in the room where the dining room is, to the left, there's a little room there. So my daytime meetings are there. The 6:45 meetings are in this room over here.