Talk

Angela 2 — Week 5, Day 3, Session 6 — 23 minutes

Summary: Russell invites a pause, then speaks about loyalty to presence and gaps that loosen a constructed self. Presencing and witnessing are in and with: a child in the water, and a symbolizer checking images against the felt sense. He then sets up a partner process around something one might like to learn about.

The constructed self

[Russell:] So, welcome back, and just pause a moment and let the energy drop down.

Next thing, sitting here and feeling yourself coming down, letting the — notice the sounds.

So, again, from our — how we could say, constructed self point of view, from the thought reality that we create.

You might have noticed that it's easy, in the course of the day, even when we go, okay, I'm gonna pause and drop down, that it becomes a thought. It's like we're almost dropping down. We're almost feeling our body, but we're staying in the train of thought. We're staying on the train. On that, just that hair's difference.

And so it really takes a loyalty to presence, to pause and to interrupt.

And, you know, it's very, very helpful. For me it's very helpful, and it may be for you, to give permission that sometimes that's really difficult. And the pauses can be quite brief, and the dropping down can be quite brief, but it's still creating a gap in the level of our person that keeps the past returning, that keeps repeating who we think we are.

That doesn't mean there aren't consistencies from moment to moment, and there aren't aspects that we're not creating in our thought. But there is a sustained thought, or sustained level of the self, that remembers itself.

And it's just so very helpful when there are gaps in that, so we can use that level of the self effectively and not have it become our identity. And so the gaps are really helpful.

I think I've talked about that in terms of creating Swiss cheese, creating Swiss cheese out of the seemingly solid sense of the self image, or the created self.

Not knowing

[Russell:] Which has been very, very important for me, and this comes from a Zen background. It's a really helpful adaptation from the Zen. You don't have to go into the whole Zen world for this, is to really value not knowing.

Whereas in those gaps, there's a sense — what's scary about the gaps is, even if we kind of don't like what we keep creating, at least it's familiar. There's some part of us that really doesn't want the unknown, right?

So just the gaps, and to somehow cultivate the not knowing as a ground.

And, well, how do we cultivate not knowing? It feels so nebulous. Your bottom is on this. This graph here.

I don't have to know the answer to my whole life questions. I don't have to know. In fact, I don't, so I don't.

But it's out of somehow being with the not knowing that the next something is co-created by this inner world and the world around me. And then I feel like there's harmony with my life.

It's not always wonderful, but there's a sense of not simply functioning out of my separate, isolated universe of trying to create out of that.

In and with

[Russell:] So this being with what's alive, being not too far — so it's a little bit in it, and it's with it, and within, in with. In with, within, witnessing. Presencing and witnessing, right? Presencing and witnessing.

So that the sense of presencing that we're using is not only being really in the moment. It has the in, but it's also with the moment, and they're simultaneous, so that the presencing includes the witnessing.

Can you get that picture? So sometimes when we just talk about presencing, or presence, it's the sense of being in the moment. And we want that sense of intimacy and vitality. Intimacy is the best quality of in.

And this paradoxical sense, that to be really intimate includes a noticing of the one who's intimate. It includes a noticing, and not only a kind of lost in the moment. But in the noticing, it's not a distancing.

So that — it feels so powerful, because that space is constantly changing.

In with, within, in with, within, in with, within. It's both and, and it's elusive as to how much is needed for my inner life at any time. How much — or when I'm with somebody, how much space do they need?

And how close, you know. If I get too close, then they gotta do something, either get some sort of hostile toward me or run away, if I get too close in a way that's not comfortable. If I get too far, there's a sense of isolation, distance, disconnection.

So whether it's with my inner life or with another, there's this navigating, or calibrating, of listening to the space in between us and how we're dancing together.

The child in the water

[Russell:] So I have this image that I use sometimes. I sometimes use it if there's an uncomfortable place that needs attention. But it doesn't have to be an uncomfortable place. It could also be any

place that I want to bring attention to. But for now, let's talk about an uncomfortable place that needs some attention.

I have this image of, it's like a child who's kind of drowning and keeping her head, his head, above water. And the witnessing — is the child swimming, or is the child drowning? Does the child need to be in that space? Maybe they're okay in this space.

So the witness might be right nearby, ready to help, but also not getting pulled into the water if that's not going to be helpful. So the witness doesn't jump in the water, but it's right there.

But maybe the child's learning to swim. Maybe you need to be a little bit further away, but able to hear. Or maybe they need a little bit more space. You need to be even further away.

And this movement of the in and with — the coming close, the moving further away — is such a key move for our inner life, for how we are with our own inner life, and how we are with others.

Witness, feeling, and symbolizer

[Russell:] And if I picture the whole embodied listening, or focusing, kind of process, we could imagine that there's this well. Sometimes I picture it that way. And there's this whole territory, down to the water, up to the surface, where the witness and withness are kind of moving, distancing themselves closer, further away.

And then up top here is what I sometimes call the symbolizer. It's the one inside who gets the images that we use in a focusing or embodied listening. It's kind of a different level of consciousness. It's up here on the surface, and it has contact. I mean, this is all one person, of course. It has contact with what the witness is experiencing, what the one down there, and it's getting images.

Because the witness is not the one that gets the images. It's there connecting, and the child in the water doesn't get the images. So this one's full of feeling, this one's full of being with, and this one is able to symbolize, is even able to, in real life, organize responses. This is more cortical functioning.

And so I want to give you this picture. If it's helpful, use it. If it's not, it's certainly not quite the truth or something, but it's an image that I find helpful. I'll leave it around for later and play with it. And again, if you don't resonate with it, throw it out. It's only here if it's — can you see it all? Or is this too small to see?

That's the best way to try to show it. Well, I guess maybe you'll have to look at it later.

But all of this, you know, these are the witness, witnessing function. That's kind of the main place we sculpt today. This is some feeling state inside that needs company.

It doesn't need this one to jump in the water. It doesn't want you just swimming in the same stew, so to speak. It needs you to have a little bit of space. But sometimes it needs to be really close, so this one feels so safe that this one could be there.

Sometimes this one needs you to just know it's there and listen to it. Interact with it, but not be in its face too much. Sometimes it wants even further. You know, let me just hear you.

And then up here is what I call both the symbolizer and the organizer. It has two main functions. One I put in the symbol of a meditator, which is just kind of getting images and symbols that it's checking, checking with this one.

Is this right? That feels like a really scary pool you're in, or am I right? You feel like this is a really wonderful place to be swimming in. Do I got that right?

So this one creates the symbols, and this always checks it out with the feeling sense, how it feels in there. And this one is really the main place that's interacting.

So these, I think of as different levels that are all important in ourselves, that are functioning. And when we're in a — especially in a challenging state, it's usually not so helpful when the rest of the self dives in, and all you feel is, I'm just challenged and there's no way out of here. I don't navigate these waters.

So in the rich inner life, that's why that language we work with on the first week, and we've cultivated that presencing language.

I am sensing something in me.

I am sensing something in me that feels like it's drowning. Is that right?

So that allows some sense of distance, some sense of enough space for the process to unfold.

I'm with you. I hear you.

And if we're accompanying somebody, maybe it's something like, so you're sensing something in you that feels like it's drowning.

Maybe let that place know you hear it, or you sense it.

Maybe they go, well — she got really scared. Oh, there's something. Really scared to be with anyone.

So that's how we can realize the real importance of how much space we're giving to anything we're accompanying. Anything we're putting our hand out and walking along with.

Something you might like to learn about

[Russell:] And what I want to say — we're going to, as part of our next process, spend some time, in partners, with something that you might like to learn about. Something in your life that you might like to learn about.

That's a very nice construction, by the way, that I find much more helpful than something I want to solve. Some problem or something. What might I like to learn about? That's alive in my life. And that might be something that's wonderful in my life. That might be something that's challenging in my life, but something that I might like to learn about.

And then I will spend time. And when I say I will spend time, it means with my body, getting information from my body.

My body has two meanings there. My physical body, meaning I'm grounded, I'm here, and my feeling body, how it feels in here. So I'm getting feedback from both of those.

And it's not only at the beginning that I get the grounded, kind of more neutral physical body. Also during the session, I find it helpful to just, oh, let me just settle back down and just be here, and then take a fresh sense of the feeling body.

Do you get how I'm using physical body and feeling body? Those, I think, are familiar to you, yeah?

So even along the way, I'm getting senses of both of those, the physical body, the feeling body. Of course, the feeling body is physical, but we've made that distinction in the past, right?

The living process

[Russell:] So I want that, and then the how it feels in here. My physical body, this feeling sense, then I'm tuning in also to the images that come. And always checking those images with the feeling sense, with the felt sense.

And as the images and the feeling sense line up, there's almost always some kind of movement. And we want to be describing what happens in there. So it's like we're following this living process.

I'm not telling you anything you don't know. I'm just reminding you, and encouraging you to trust the living process.

We're not eliminating the symbolizing. The thinking — thinking and symbolizing are part of the same realm. We're not getting rid of that. It's just, it's not leading. It's part of a larger process.

And anytime we're feeling lost or present, we can come back down to our physical body. And it's kind of our ground, our neutral, and then go back in fresh.

And we're saying that we're functioning from a hypothesis. We're saying maybe — Gene's favorite word, and I love the way he says it. Maybe. Maybe.

Maybe there's a kind of knowing that we're not in touch with yet, until we spend the time with all of that together. And it really is a different level of consciousness that we go to, which is why it surprises the level of consciousness we're talking about now, that something actually comes. It surprises me that it's unknown before.

Symbolizing

[Participant:] Can you elaborate a little bit, where you said the images, but then a little bit later you said thinking and —

[Russell:] Okay, yeah, thinking and symbolizing, yes. Yes, yes, yes.

What I'm saying is that I like the word symbolizing because it includes words that come, and it includes images. It includes any representations.

And when the representations and the way it feels in there line up, then it's kind of like, you know, you're in Las Vegas and you go, please, please, please. You know what I mean? It's like there's a lining up, and that's a moment of integration for the inner life.

Even then, nothing was solved necessarily, but there's a kind of relief in that moment of lineup, usually.

[Participant:] Gambling references.

[Russell:] Yeah, very helpful. That works, huh? Oh, it's just the head again.

A recorded session

[Russell:] So I would like to have a partner, and have a partner who would be happy to have a session that other people listen to and see. Just to kind of bring us back into the language and spirit and style of listening, and maybe there's something that you learned from some modeling of it.

[Participant:] Yeah, yeah, wanna do that, and then you'll guide me through a process later.

[Russell:] I didn't mention that part first. I didn't do that intentionally. Would you be willing?

Oh, that's great. Okay.

So what I would like to do is, I want to quickly go to the bathroom. Hopefully this is not a break unless you really need the bathroom, and then come back, and then I'd like to guide you through a session.

We're gonna record it, and if you don't want it at the end, if something came up that you just don't feel good about, we'll erase it. Okay, but for now, we'll record it. And you absolutely have that choice, and there's no judgment either way, okay?

It's really important that you know that that's totally fine, okay?