Practice

Angela 2 — Week 5, Day 3, Session 7 — 49 minutes

Summary: Russell demonstrates embodied listening with a participant who wants to learn how to live with recurring images and symbols. A fountain arises in the body, powerful and then shut off, and the session moves between the full fountain and a small souvenir. The group then asks about meaning, listening, and staying with what is alive.

Opening

[Russell:] So, a couple of things I want to say, and then I'll bring all my attention to you. I'll say this to the group.

First — how do I want to say it?

As you know, I'm very, very, very indebted to Gene, and also to Ann Cornell, for the learning that I've done around this kind of listening. And what I call embodied listening is sometimes not exactly traditional focusing, right? So I'm not here to demonstrate, necessarily. I may break all the rules, for those of you who have studied focusing, because I'm not wedded to that. I respect it. It's great.

So if Participant 1 agrees, I give myself permission to ask things, to comment. It'll look very focusing-like, but I also want you to know I am totally at home with you saying no to something — that I'll say something, and you say that's not right. I don't look for agreement.

I look to see how I can support the process, so feel totally free if I make a suggestion that doesn't feel right. I am in service to you, and I absolutely trust your process.

What I'm attempting to do is not only follow your process, but maybe be some fertilizer for it sometimes. Right?

[Participant 1:] Yeah.

[Russell:] Yes. Does this distance feel good? Can you hear me okay?

[Participant 1:] Yes.

[Russell:] Okay.

So we'll take, oh, say 25 minutes, and if you feel finished earlier, that's fine. But I'll — a few minutes before sound good?

[Participant 1:] Good.

[Russell:] And do you like me to guide you in there?

[Participant 1:] Well, start, and you can decide if you want to. I don't know.

[Russell:] You don't know?

Okay, so maybe you just start, and you have something in mind that you'd like to learn about?

[Participant 1:] Well, since I volunteered, I thought the actual assignment is somewhat in that area — topic-oriented, in a sense. Like, what would I like to learn about? What am I curious about?

And the way I'll put it now, it would be that I would like to learn more about how to live with this information that keeps coming to me, in certain images and symbols.

And I know it means a lot to me, and I want to know what it means, and how to tap into the power that seems to be there. The power, the strength — or just actually the fact that it's organically arriving.

So I sort of trust that there's something I want to — also, sort of like sculpting. It's like there's material, and it's been given to me, and it's malleable. It's changeable. And yet it's also a certain kind of material. So it's finding the sculpture in the raw material, but also knowing that how I handle that raw material will partly determine what the sculpture is.

So that's the area I want to pursue.

[Russell:] Let me see how much of it I got, and how much I'm missing, so that we can help really hone it down.

So I'm hearing that you've been getting these images, these symbols, that are a poke for you, and there's a real wanting to know something about their meaning, and how to work with them, how to be with them, how to kind of sculpt with them, so that — guessing something like, so that their value can come into your life more fully.

Coming closer

[Russell:] So maybe just take a few moments to let the energy drop down, and begin from that kind of neutral. I'm here, on this spot. Feel the bottom, the hands, the feet.

And from this settling, just start going into the inner body, inside your throat and chest, your belly, your lower belly, all that. Starting in there, and just bring the gentle invitation for your inner life to resonate with — what is it about these images that keep coming, these symbols?

[Participant 1:] There's something about a coming in. A gathering in. Getting closer, like from even beyond arm's length, in my middle area. There's something — the next time, they're closer, and then they're around me, touching me, and then they're actually a part of me.

And each time, even now, I feel they're so reachable. They're so instant. They're so accessible that I don't have to go very far.

I mean, it's like now it's sort of gotten to the point where they feel like these sconces, like these lamps, that are half of a bowl. And they're around my waist, and really around my middle.

And they're differentiated bowls. Once they were — I swear to God, they're morphing. They're morphing. It's beautiful. It's beautiful because it's their own. I'm not working.

A change that they were playing with — it's like they were, first, a multi-ring circus, and then they became like cups, jars, around like a utility belt, in these separate containers. They had their separate — and they're always going around.

And now they're becoming like — they're not coming from outside. They're sort of flipping, as if they're able to just come out like these lamps, from me. And every one of them — you see what I'm —

[Russell:] I can see.

[Participant 1:] This act, this kind of nature, has its own —

Okay, let me slow down, because I can get carried away elaborating on them. I just want to see what they're — this is never the same, really.

The fountain

[Russell:] Yeah, yeah. So really take your time to sense right now.

[Participant 1:] Right.

[Russell:] These bowls that came from outside are now really in there, and they're separate compartments, and — just sensing how they're alive in you right now.

[Participant 1:] Well, they're even lining up, in terms of a fountain. As they go up towards my head, they become a smaller circumference and radius.

And there's some — oh, I'm so glad that I'm doing this with you, because it's really like I've been working hard to be the circus master, and to take one from jar to jar. But now it's like there's this back, and up and down, flowing, spilling, so that it goes off, and then it's circulation. Circulation.

[Russell:] Go slow here.

So there's this fountain, and it has this up, up, up, smaller, smaller, smaller, and it's circulating. The circulation. You can feel that.

[Participant 1:] And the fluid, the liquid, is moving. It's moving through this conduit, through the central channel, and then it spills out. It cascades down.

So this is a big change from being around me.

[Russell:] Right.

[Participant 1:] And something I kind of put two here and three there.

[Russell:] Yeah, so really let it be as it is right now.

You're sensing this fountain right up the central axis, and it overflows. And really let yourself get the felt sense of that whole fountain overflowing, in the central axis of yourself.

[Participant 1:] I am definitely wide at the base, and up top I can hear it. It is much — almost like a sound and light show up here, where it comes out. And it's not really a big jet, but I definitely feel it in my eyelids, you know, dancing.

I hear my pulse. I don't talk.

[Russell:] Yeah, so pause. It's really staying with the sense of that. Just right with how it is to be with all of that pulsing in your eyes. Sound and light show.

[Participant 1:] I feel a centrality. And I hear some birds, sounds in the room, and I — wow. Like being a fountain in the middle of a plaza.

[Russell:] Like being a fountain. Feel that width at the bottom, hands open. A fountain in the middle of a plaza.

Let your whole body have this fountain right now. If that feels right, just let it be there, letting it be sensed, letting it show you its offering to your life.

[Participant 1:] I see a little movie clip where I'm walking up to the fountain, and I want to make an offer. I don't know.

Offering is right. Offering — throw a penny in and make a wish. It's not that. It's not that.

[Russell:] No.

[Participant 1:] No. No. Do I want to take some water off? Do I want to wash myself?

[Russell:] So maybe come back. Not thinking about it. Letting the fountain, and your sense of that wide base, and this overflowing fountain that goes all the way up — and just letting the sense of that be alive in you, and a very gentle feeling of its quality.

[Participant 1:] Very powerful.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 1:] It's very — I said it wasn't a jet, up out like that, but the force that comes up is very powerful. It's very powerful.

Lights out

[Participant 1:] And — oh no, it stopped there. It's almost like a little afraid of how powerful it is.

[Russell:] So let's go slow here. There's a sense of something that's a little afraid of just how powerful.

[Participant 1:] It's dangerous. It's dangerous to align myself with my own power, or the power that's given, provided.

[Russell:] Let's pause here. Let's go slow. See if it feels right.

There's something inside. I'm sensing something inside — if that feels right to say it that way. I'm sensing something inside that's scared of how powerful that is.

See if that wants some change, or if that feels just right.

[Participant 1:] I just shut it off. It went dry.

[Russell:] Well, let's take time.

[Participant 1:] There's no — the lights went out.

[Russell:] The lights went out.

[Participant 1:] Nighttime, and it's been turned off.

[Russell:] Yeah.

So let's be with what this is like now. The fountain is turned off. The lights are out.

[Participant 1:] I feel a little crumbling.

[Russell:] You're noticing a kind of crumbling.

[Participant 1:] Collapsing a little.

[Russell:] Okay, so really give some space to the sense of collapsing in there, and you're acknowledging that. Yeah. And notice if the collapsing place might like some attention.

[Participant 1:] Right.

It feels like consoling the collapsing, reassuring it.

[Russell:] And does that feel right for the collapsing place, to be consoled and to be reassured? Is it liking that?

[Participant 1:] Yeah, a hundred percent.

So there's an energy that wants to console it, and it really wants to console it, like a mother who just doesn't want to see the child in pain, regardless — or something.

[Russell:] Yeah.

Let the collapsed place know you're here. How it wants some of that consoling, but not all of it. You're right there with it.

See if it has more that it wants you to know about. How it is to be it. How it is to be alive, in that way.

[Participant 1:] So — how it is consoling me, and letting me — what's the big deal?

The water is flowing all the time. Sometimes it comes up.

[Russell:] Oh, so it's like — what's the panic about?

[Participant 1:] Oh, so —

[Russell:] Go slow here.

[Participant 1:] There's a real sense that something's going, don't worry about it. What's the panic here? It's not always going to be flowing like that, but it's not gone away.

[Russell:] See if that feels right, that you can have some sense.

[Participant 1:] Whoa. It's like this structure, the structure of the fountain, is still intact.

Actually, the receptacles — now they're different things. Wood and brass, like big magnolia petals or something. You see, they're like — it's not just dead concrete. It's changed. It's alive. It's changing.

[Russell:] Let it know that you're sensing how alive it is.

And we've got a few more minutes here, so let yourself sense into it. It's really alive. It changes flow. And does it feel right to say that yet it doesn't go away? It's there, and it changes.

[Participant 1:] It feels right to know that I can be sleeping in the pension around the corner from the fountain, and it's not turned on, but it's still there, and in the morning it will be.

[Russell:] Just take a few moments for you to sense that. It doesn't have to be in its full form for you to feel —

[Participant 1:] I have a little replica of it, like a tourist.

[Russell:] Yeah. Notice how that feels in there. What's it feel like in your body right now, to have all of that?

[Participant 1:] It feels like that monumental sense — almost scary power — has been maybe shrunk too much, but it's manageable. It's like my souvenir of experience.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 1:] And I think I want to keep the souvenir. 'Cause I want to keep the souvenir.

[Russell:] Would it feel right, as you're with that —

[Participant 1:] And I'm learning about kind of how to navigate between the full-blown fountain and the souvenir, and how to be with all of those energies.

[Russell:] It's true?

[Participant 1:] It's true. A calibrating. The size, the right size.

[Russell:] The size. You're finding the right size, and it's not one size fits all.

[Participant 1:] Right?

[Russell:] It's not one size fits all. It's sometimes really big and powerful, and sometimes it's smaller, yet it's still there.

See if that all feels right.

[Participant 1:] I'm asking it, somehow, if it feels all right to be reduced sometimes just to a little keychain trinket — but a real, meaningful — it's just a trinket. It sounds trivial, but that's sometimes all I can handle.

And it's there. It's fine. I mean, it's less. It's just aggregate concrete — concrete, something else. More back to that rock, that sculptable material.

[Russell:] Yeah, it's got more malleability in it.

[Participant 1:] Yeah, it's less solid.

[Russell:] Nice.

Okay, so just take a moment to feel these changes in your body. And if it feels right, let this fountain image, and the way that feels in you, know that it has more — that you're really studying this movement from really big to small, and its different forms. And that you'll be back to learn more about it.

[Participant 1:] What was the last thing you said?

[Russell:] And that you'll be back to learn more about it.

[Participant 1:] Well, the feeling is mutual. So will it.

[Russell:] Yes. Yes.

Yeah. And let yourself just feel that you're sitting here. Feel your bottom. Feel your hands.

When you feel ready, let your eyes open. And take your time to feel into the room.

[Participant 1:] Thank you.

[Russell:] Thank you.

[Participant 1:] Thank you very much.

After the session

[Participant 1:] It's bigger than both of us.

[Russell:] Bigger than both of us.

[Participant 1:] It's a funny commentary — humorous, right, whatever — that sometimes I will come out of focusing with my partner, journaling, associating a dream, what have you, and it's like, I'm not making this stuff up.

[Russell:] Right, right.

[Participant 1:] Yeah. I mean, I am cooperating. I'm trying, to the best of my ability, to make it happen, but something else is much —

That water source under the ground. It's not treated water.

[Russell:] Can I make a comment?

[Participant 1:] Yes.

[Russell:] Okay. So what touches me so much is the way you've had two main comments that I've heard from you over the last two days.

One about finding the right volume of your voice.

[Participant 1:] Hallelujah.

[Russell:] And the other, of calibrating kind of your size, in a way. Which — you're a big guy, so how to calibrate your energies, we could say. And that your inner life brings this so precisely.

[Participant 1:] Yeah.

[Russell:] It's just like, oh God, we are in touch with this source. And I so appreciate your letting that in, and letting it give you what it gave you now, and that there's more there in the unfolding, because it's a changing shape and texture, and it is malleable.

It is malleable, and it's not there for you to control, but for you to interact with. And I appreciate that very much.

[Participant 1:] Well. I think we all say it, and we mean it in different ways, but I'm grateful, because you create the conditions that allow me to pay attention to this, and to honor it.

And this phase of my life is a treasure. So, thank you.

[Russell:] And is it okay if I ask if there are any questions, or anything? Is there anything that's wanting to be said, commented on, asked about, before we move on?

Questions

[Participant 2:] Yeah. Maybe you just answered it, but I'll ask.

The one thing I didn't hear you attempt, and I've seen you do in the past, is to connect images that are coming up with some — to try to tie them into knowledge, moods, experiences, to give us something tangible, as opposed to imagery. Which I think was very accurate as well. Trying to give meaning to it.

[Russell:] Yeah. So —

[Participant 2:] Give meaning to it.

[Russell:] Yeah. To me, Participant 1, the meaning was implicit. It was already coming out of this bigness, this overflowing — that it was changing, that it got really small. Just what I said at the end, which was accurate for Participant 1. That this is really a life issue that's being worked with, and it was precisely expressed in the image, and felt into.

[Participant 2:] I did get that at the very end. But let me ask one more question. Had you not had prior knowledge of Participant 1, this being your first experience, would you have approached it any differently?

[Russell:] I'll guess, yeah, there might have been. If it was somebody brand new to me, I might have needed to check in a little bit more, that they were in their bodily process.

I could see Participant 1 was grounded in his body. When his hands were wide, he was wide in his energy. He was there. When it was up here, I mean, it was clearly alive. It wasn't a story. It wasn't a symbol that he's now thinking about. And then it was a fountain, and it grew into a fountain, and then it grew into this. And I think it was very grounded in his body.

I would have, maybe, with a brand new person, not gotten that as precisely. I would have maybe checked in a little bit more, to make sure that what I'm perceiving is accurate. So I might have had a couple more times of saying — which I did twice, I think — maybe a couple more times of saying something like, well, maybe pause a second and just feel how all that is in your body right now.

[Participant 2:] Maybe.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 3:] Just going to say — this is beautiful to witness. It amazes me, both.

And there's something, again, like I've heard others of us say in past segments too. This was such a unique session, and it was so helpful to witness, because — imagery, but it was definitely coming from a felt sense.

And what struck me was your skill as a listener. I wanted to understand. I feel like, in that role, maybe you didn't have an implicit understanding, but it doesn't matter that there's some story you're connecting with, in the way you were just repeating what he said. Even if I have no idea what that means. And how helpful that was for him.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 3:] That he was with something that was alive. You know what I mean? I had a lot of, like, I have no idea what's going on. I'm not sure. But you were — it's like I'm remembering people saying, you just say back what they said. That's how you listen. You know what I mean? I wasn't understanding.

[Russell:] Yeah. Yeah.

[Participant 3:] There were the fingers on the pulse of something alive.

[Russell:] Yeah. Yeah.

Well, you know what, Participant 3 — I really do trust people's process. I really do. I really do. I sometimes don't understand it. It sometimes goes indirect. But ultimately, I trust not only their process. I trust the process of being together.

So I said something that was not helpful. I was picturing that this fountain was offering something to him, and he heard it as an offering, like three coins in the fountain, which took him a little away. It didn't mess things up or anything. It just was not helpful. What I was getting in that moment didn't get across as a helpful something.

[Participant 1:] Actually, it did. And I just did a flipperoo. I mean, I heard you say, what is it offering to you? And my immediate response was that I would make an offering to you.

[Russell:] Right.

[Participant 1:] So I did. I think I did.

[Russell:] You didn't — you weren't. Okay. Okay.

But there were a few places in there where I don't just follow. I do, and I give myself lots of permission, if the person agrees, to sometimes — my intuition will pull something out of the vapors, and when it hits, it's really wonderful.

But I do mostly be with, and feel so honored to be with somebody's process, and with what gets stirred inside, to be with them.

[Participant 4:] No, 'cause this'll come out.

[Russell:] Go ahead.

[Participant 4:] Well, I don't know what the question is, but there was just a moment that really drew my attention, about the process. It seemed like an essential aspect of the unfolding.

Russell, when you invited Participant 1 into presence language, around the there's something dangerous about the power, and then — I wonder if it's as true to say, I'm sensing something. And with that shift is when the lights went out, and everything changed.

And I had a feeling like, if I were in your shoes — I'm like, oh shit, that was — I just put it down.

[Russell:] So you're wondering how that was for me?

[Participant 4:] Yeah, yeah.

[Russell:] So in that moment, there was maybe half a second of something in that direction, but just about immediately it was, oh, good. We can't just live in this. What else is there?

And so then I was grateful that this other began to evolve, because that's actually more whole. It's like I can't only live in ecstasy or something, you know? So the fact that that came at a moment of presence language is actually quite interesting.

So let me get theoretical. I don't know that this is true. But it's an interesting premise — that we're not doing this just to feel good, or to have powerful experiences. We're doing this for unfolding, right?

Which means, if someone — if their presence is getting carried away by a wonderful thing, it's not so different than getting carried away by a challenging emotional state.

And if it can't live in the light of presence, then something else needs to be seen about it, until it can live in the light. You get what I mean?

So it's kind of a further — a longer thing than, maybe, had we just stayed there, we could have had just this. But I'm not sure that has as much transformative potential as having the big, and the relic, and the — and I don't know where that'll live six months from now, but I have a suspicion that that's in process.

[Participant 5:] Yeah. Yes.

So I have an observation from my own listening experience, or even a question for you, Participant 1.

The observation that I have, from my own process of being you, was very challenging, but in a great sense. Because there was, through most of your focusing, this inner question of, where is he going? There were just these sconces and fountains, and I was trying to have some idea of what it was meaning for you.

And it reminded me of watching a movie that you didn't understand, what was going on, and then turning it off, and then it goes on to win all the Oscars.

[Russell:] What an image.

[Participant 5:] And so I found myself, like I said, challenged from a great place. Because although there was that little voice that I did not respond to, but was there, of — boy, those trees are awfully nice out there. Comfortable. There was that in the background, that I didn't go to, but was there.

And yet a real being with this complete unknown. And the fact that I was able to continue being with that, I felt, gave me a real sense of understanding, and coming to some huge gratitude — of a completion, of an understanding of Participant 1 attaining something. And that I was able to be a part of that attainment.

So that was my observation, from the listener's perspective.

And then the question I have for you is — I don't know, a simple answer, if it's any more detailed — when you were going through your process, and you were talking about these sconces all over you, and the water coming up, and then there was a tool belt, and all of that, and then the water,

and then it was getting smaller. Did you have any sense of what that was meaning through the process, or was it —

[Russell:] I want to not ask that question.

[Participant 5:] Oh, okay.

[Russell:] It's not a bad question to ask, and he might feel fine answering it, but for now, I'd really like it just to settle in his process a little longer, before we look too much at it.

And I know you probably really would — might enjoy answering it, but let's just let the way it felt, and feels, in your body, and the large fountain and the little one, how they can know each other.

[Participant 1:] Because if I were to answer, it's very much talking about it. The next time I sort of go to it, I want to go fresh to it.

[Russell:] Yes. I really — yeah. Yeah.

[Participant 5:] Okay.

[Russell:] This will be the last one, because I want to —

[Participant 6:] So Participant 1 caught his own process, and he said, oh, I often get too involved in the details. I don't want to.

My question is, if he hadn't done that himself, as a listener, might you have offered that?

[Russell:] Sure. If he hadn't called that to himself, that would have been a time I would have brought him back. Just sense it all in your body right now. Just come back.

[Participant 6:] Right.

[Russell:] But it was getting — yeah.

[Participant 6:] And I just thought it was interesting he caught it, as a way that it was maybe interfering.

[Russell:] Exactly. Right. Okay, so just sense how that — we'll let it.

[Participant 6:] Right. Great.

[Russell:] Okay. Thank you for your listening.

Partner practice

[Russell:] This is what's up. If you need to, you can use the bathroom, whatever. Have a partner. We can use the room out here as well as this room.

And what I'd like to invite is an approximately 25-minute session. We'll do one session, and so you'll finish a little before 5:30, and then we'll come in here, and we're going to have a brief walking and a sitting before dinner.

After dinner, when we come back — and I think 7:15 is okay. It seemed like it to me. Does that seem too rushed for anybody?

[A participant:] That's good.

[Russell:] All right. 7:15 will be our evening time, until otherwise announced.

And at 7:15, we're going — we don't need this recorder.