Practice

Angela 2 — Week 5, Day 4, Session 7 — 59 minutes

Summary: Russell invites a resource image back into the body, then underlines the difference between a story about a quality and letting it resonate. He models an embodied listening session with a partner, staying with sorrow, anger, and a controlling part until a wider sense of connection forms, and sends the group to practice from grounded presence.

A key image

[Russell:] Just close your eyes for a few moments, and drop your attention down, and invite a kind of key image.

It might be one image. It might be a moving picture. A key image from your resource, something that can kind of remind you of the resource. So just a snapshot, just a kind of picture, and then invite the most important bodily senses, how your body resonates with that scene.

You're inviting your body. You're not making it. You're seeing if it wants it, if it's willing to have that right now.

You're letting the image, maybe there are some words, and the body sense come together.

And then, as soon as you have some contact with that, let it just be there, and let your eyes open. Come into being right here.

I wonder if you can sense that it's not so far away. That it's — maybe you don't have that. But I'm wondering, is there a sense that your body knows that, and with certain words combined with images and sensations, it's actually there? It's not just, I wish it was there.

And it's possible you're not experiencing that. You don't have to try to force anything, and there'll be times maybe when your body can't find it. But what I notice is these pathways get more and more known, and the inner world knows where it would be if it could be, where it will be when it can be. And it needs invitations, and it needs models.

And the amazing, unbelievable thing to me is that the models are all in there. But who pays attention in that way? Kids do spontaneously in their play, but they're not conscious of what they're playing — the imagery, and how it feels in the body, and all the things that we're bringing awareness to.

What I want to say is, I know for a lot of you this is really fun, but I don't want to trivialize it also. I like that it's fun, for those who found it fun, and I want to make sure we're seeing that there's something potentially profound in what we're investigating. That's kind of remarkable.

Is it true that these qualities of rare human beings are not separate from us as ordinary people, that we've touched those qualities, we've resonated with them? Tomorrow we'll go to where we felt something like that in our own experience. We're going to do something different right now.

But to have a model that is in your body is a supreme gift. I just want to underline its value for us.

And people doing inner work haphazardly stumble on these things, and they go, oh yeah, I really feel my — or I really feel my — but that we can consciously access something because it's already resonant in us. It just needs encouragement. Needs the yeast of our encouragement and the watering of our awareness.

Letting it come in

[Russell:] Yeah, please.

[Participant:] One of the things I found really interesting about this process was that it was a kind of image, and a character, that had shown up in my inner life many times over the last twenty, twenty-five years. And it was the first time of really unpacking it to those other levels. It had popped up as a kind of compass in ways, but to really go into the many levels of it, to get in more deeply than, oh yeah, that's interesting.

[Russell:] Right. Or just — your hand is pointing. When to take it in, to internalize.

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] And just having it out. I mean, your hand told the story, in that gesture.

We can have these things living around us as nice images, that we can then talk about and tell stories about. Oh, that's really nice. I've got this, came in my dream, this Native American, and he's full of this, and it's a nice story, but it's living outside my body.

But to take the moments to let it come in. That's why I ask for present tense, and I ask you not to just tell the story that you already know about it, but to let it come alive in this moment, so it resonates at many levels.

So those of you who are bringing this work to others, know that that's radically different than people having a pleasant experience telling the memory of a character that they enjoyed, or somebody letting it resonate in there, speaking from in there.

Radically different. It looks very close. It's that hair's breadth that's ten thousand miles, you know.

Who can really feel that. It's true.

Gesture

[Participant:] This is a good time. And there was a sensitivity about interrupting while it was going on. But we talked about it afterwards. And there were actual shifts that came through gestures. When at one point somebody was talking about a character, and then became — and you could actually see it, as the listener, as the witness. And I just would like to know if there's anything more that a listener should do with that. It seems very rich.

[Russell:] Yes, I'm with you. I'm very tuned into gesture. You see me commenting on it a lot, and that's true when I am listening to myself, and true when I'm listening with other people.

Sometimes, if it's a guided kind of listening practice where I'm asked to be a presence for somebody — if they are not conscious of what their hands are doing, or how they're gesturing, or how their body is moving, I might, if it feels right, notice what your right hand is doing right now, as you're talking about how that's touching you.

And so I help them bring awareness to something that's already there, but is lingering in the back. And when they get that, it often goes all the way down.

[Participant:] When you were working with someone yesterday, you did a lot of — I was behind him, so I don't know, but it seemed like you were modeling.

[Russell:] Yeah, very often.

[Participant:] His eyes were shut.

[Russell:] His eyes were shut.

One of the ways that I sometimes connect with people — and it's spontaneous most of the time. I'll tell you the instances when it's not. One of the ways I resonate with other people is their gestures. I don't think about it. These things just start happening.

The only times it's intentional is when I'm having difficulty sensing somebody. I find intentionally mirroring their gestures can help me to sense. It kind of gives me a wavelength.

Okay, so anything else from all that?

Oh, good. Yes, it does, isn't it? It's huge, isn't it? When it's the about, or it is the actual happening.

Thanks for mentioning that, because I hear that over and over, even in my weekend groups, if I do a process like this. And it's hard for people. They're saying, oh yeah, I kind of saw that, and I can remember that, and I can bring them in.

Yeah, thank you for that.

Modeling the session

[Russell:] Okay, so what I'd like to move into is — I talked about using the second resource process. I'd rather do that tomorrow, because what I want to do now is take time for another embodied listening process with a partner.

And it seemed helpful yesterday for me to model, so I'm going to model again, by guiding a partner through a focusing session. And it's great, because he hasn't done a whole lot of focusing, which is great. So we can approach it freshly.

But I'm going to ask, for the start of the session, for both people to begin standing. Stand together, the two of us. And there are two things I want to invite.

I want to invite the sense that we've been working with, the grounded presence. So just shift your weight. Feel whatever gives you that feeling in your body. Center. Length. That we're already beginning from a place of grounded, centered presence.

And I'm going to be inviting him. I've asked him if this is okay to do, and he has agreed.

But now I'm going to invite him to find a subject, and the subject I'd like to invite is something in your life that's somewhat challenging. Maybe there's something in your life.

Okay. And right now, just feel the qualities we've been working with, and also, next step, invite the image that you just had, that you were working with, and feel in your body that image. And the key sensations. And you might even say out loud some of the key sensations.

[Participant:] Of the center, and the feet on the ground. There's also mobility. The feet are not glued on the ground, and there's attention to the space around, up and down, and left and right, and all around.

[Russell:] Great. Beautiful. Let yourself have all of that right now, as you're standing here.

That quality. You can even let that image be there occasionally, but mostly, just your living body.

Okay. And I'm going to go get me a stool. So, thank you. You can sit down.

And is this distance okay?

And as always, I want you to feel completely free to say yes, to say no. When I give a suggestion that's not helpful, I'm speaking too much, not enough, I am at your service.

Is it okay with you if I feel free to speak, and you're free to go to work now?

And would you like me to guide you in, or would you like to go in with me?

[Participant:] Oh, you can guide me.

[Russell:] Yes. Okay. So just take your time.

Yeah, that's good. Yeah, we want that. We want all of that that's there. That's why we do that first, so that can be an ally in this.

You feel that groundedness. Feel how that is, and that center that you feel, and that mobility around your head, that you're taking space in all directions. That's all here.

And as you have all that, you're going to bring attention into your inner body, the places you tend to feel things. Throat and chest, and your belly, and lower belly.

So within all that grounded, centered quality, there's this whole landscape of your inner world.

And just invite in there a situation that's somewhat challenging in your life, that you'd like to learn about. You'd like to learn, maybe, how to be in that situation, or what it has to teach you.

If you want to describe the situation, as that might help your body resonate with you, and you don't have to. You don't have to have the content.

[Participant:] I feel it here, behind the sternum. Above the sternum, there's a bowl.

[Russell:] Behind the upper sternum there, you're sensing a kind of knot, or a — no, not — a bowl?

[Participant:] No, a constricted bowl.

[Russell:] Okay. So, noticing something in there, behind the upper part of your sternum, and something like constricted. There's a sense of it being kind of constricted.

[Participant:] I can tell the challenging situation is about my parents, that are getting older, and my father loses memory, and my mother doesn't know. And actually, the way my mother takes the situation is really challenging for me.

[Russell:] So there's this situation with your father losing his memory, and the way your mom is with all this is challenging.

[Participant:] It's more the way my mom is than that my father is losing memory. I can take my father as he is, but my mother is more difficult, and it's a sorrow that —

[Russell:] Yeah. You're sensing something like sorrow in there, and you went again to that same place. Something like sorrow, when you think of your mom, how she is with the situation.

Maybe just let that place there know that you're with it. That you can sense it. Check with it and see if sorrow is just the right word, or if it wants to be known in any other way.

[Participant:] There's sorrow, and there's anger. It's got both of those qualities. Yeah, because I'm angry at her. That's true. And I don't want her to — and so there's a —

[Russell:] Yeah. Would it feel right to say, or as right to say, there's something in me that's really angry? I'm sensing a place in there that's really angry.

[Participant:] Yeah. And the sorrow there, and the angriness is more here, more lower.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant:] And so I'm angry, and there's a part of me that doesn't want to be angry.

[Russell:] Okay, let's go slow here. Let's go slow. Again, does it feel okay to say, I'm sensing anger in here?

[Participant:] Yeah. And I'm noticing another place in there that doesn't want that. And the other place is rather in the head.

[Russell:] Yeah, your head's welcome. That's hard for you.

So there's a place up there that says, I don't want this anger. Then there's a place in the middle there that's —

[Participant:] Like a tower of control. Not angry. Not angry. But yet —

[Russell:] So let's just pause here, and let's see if there can be space for all this.

You're right there in your belly. There's this place that's carrying anger with your mother, with your mom, about how she is with all of this, with your father. And there's that controlling place up there that wishes it wasn't like that.

Which of those has more energy right now?

[Participant:] Right now it's a sorrow.

[Russell:] Okay, it's a sorrow. So let's be with that. Let's be with that first, if that feels right. And it can switch, but let's be with the sorrow place, and notice if it's okay with it that you give it some attention.

Kind of checking in with that sorrow place.

[Participant:] I can sense that just acknowledging the sorrow makes it more wider. And not lighter, but less harmful.

[Russell:] Yeah, less harmful. Yeah, it kind of widens. It's not lighter. It widens, and feels less harmful.

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] So let it know you sense how it's shifting, that you're with it, and you're really sensing if it wants you to know more about how it is in there, about sorrow.

[Participant:] Well, I try. Comes to that — the sorrow wants some place.

[Russell:] The sorrow wants some place. Yeah, let it know you hear that it wants some place.

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] If it likes your hand there.

[Participant:] And I feel the heat of my hand on my sorrow.

[Russell:] Yeah. And that's — it's good.

[Participant:] It's good.

[Russell:] Yeah, it's good. So let's just take our time right there. There's no rush. Let's take our time with the heat of your hand resting on the sorrow place. It wants some space. Really take your time.

[Participant:] And I feel the tower of control.

[Russell:] Yeah. So say, I know you're there.

[Participant:] I know you're there.

[Russell:] So, see if it's willing to let you be with the sorrow.

[Participant:] Yeah. Authorization from the tower.

[Russell:] Yeah, say thank you. It's really welcome. I'm not joking. It's part of you. It's also to be included.

[Participant:] Yes. Right.

[Russell:] Okay, good.

So now just take your time, and see if there's more that that sorrow would like you to know about how it is in there. What it's like to be. What it feels like from its point of view. To be alive here, in this sorrow.

[Participant:] Well, the sorrow wants space, and it wants time. Some time for me.

[Russell:] Yeah. It wants space, and it wants time, and you let it know that you're here, and we're going to give it more time and space, right?

[Participant:] I can be with my sorrow.

[Russell:] Yeah. And you just keep being with it, and listening to anything it's wanting you to know, anything it's wanting to give you.

[Participant:] I feel a tension between the sorrow and the anger.

[Russell:] Perhaps, yeah.

[Participant:] More sorrow, and less anger.

What comes is that I cannot only be angry. I have to be both.

[Russell:] I have to be both. I can't only be angry. There's room for the anger, there's space for it, and we'll give it a little bit more attention in a little bit. That there's room also for the sorrow. It's not one or the other.

See if it feels right to sense that there's space for all of that.

[Participant:] Like I feel in my shoulders and in my cheeks, that getting room and time for the sorrow is freeing. Nothing here.

[Russell:] Yeah. Your cheeks and your shoulders are really showing you how much your whole self appreciates some time and space for the sorrow.

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Silence 36 seconds]

[Participant:] And my tower of control is okay for the sorrow, but it's not okay for the anger right now.

[Russell:] Okay. So let's just check in with all of this, and see. Check in, and there's no pressure. There really needs to be a lot of space for all this.

See if it's okay with the sorrow place if you drop down and check in with the anger place. And then we'll check with the authority up there also, but first I want to check with the sorrow place.

[Participant:] With the sorrow? It's okay with the anger.

[Russell:] Okay. And is it okay with the sorrow place if you let it go in the background for a little while? Or does it really want your presence some more?

[Participant:] It's also a presence, but it invites me to see the anger.

[Russell:] Okay, good. So it can let you — it said, you can have — don't leave me completely, but you can also have that.

[Participant:] Okay. Yes.

[Russell:] Good. Oh, that's perfect. It just needs the warmth of your hand to know that you're there. That's perfect.

Okay, and now let's just check to see, will the control tower just kind of gently — asking about dropping down to learn about the anger, not to try to do anything but learn and be with it.

And if it doesn't want you to go there, sense into what it's concerned about, what it's worried about, you going and sensing into the anger.

[Participant:] I think it's angry about the anger.

[Russell:] Yeah. There's the anger about the anger.

[Participant:] Correct.

[Russell:] Yeah, that's right. So the anger about the anger is living up there in the control tower. Let it know you know just how angry it is about the anger.

[Participant:] It fights the anger.

[Russell:] Right, that's right. That place just really doesn't want the anger, and is biting, and saying, you shouldn't be angry, don't be angry.

Let it know you know it's there. See if there's anything it's wanting from you right now. From your presence.

[Silence 47 seconds]

[Participant:] Okay. So, about the anger about my mother, the anger in my stomach doesn't care about the anger in my tower of control.

[Russell:] Right. Okay, so it's just there. It doesn't care whether you want it there or not. It's just there.

[Participant:] Yeah. It's living.

[Russell:] Yeah. Well, let's see if we can be with that. Let's see if there's inner permission to be with that angry place, and check in gently with the angry place. What makes it so hard?

[Silence 34 seconds]

[Participant:] What makes it so hard is the feeling that there's nothing to do for them. And if I cannot do something, I can be angry. That's a way of doing something.

[Russell:] Yeah. Right. But let's really feel into that. It's angry. There's nothing you can do. There's nothing you can do to change your mother. There's nothing you can do to get your mother to accept your father. There's nothing you can do.

And let that place know you know how frustrated it is, that there's nothing to do. Be with that place in all of its —

[Participant:] It wants to do, and it can't.

[Russell:] Let it know you know how much it wants to be able to be helpful. Let it know you can sense how much it wants to be helpful. It wants to be able to do something. And how angry it is that it can't.

Really let it have all of that.

What happens when it receives this from you? Really listen.

[Participant:] It gets warm.

[Russell:] It gets warm. It gets warm in there.

[Participant:] Okay. So it's quiet warm, I would say. It's not angry warm. It's quiet warm.

[Russell:] Just to live into, I wish I could do something, and I can't. Just to feel the energy of that.

Bring your care to that place that's carrying, wish I could do something, but it can't. You can be with it.

We have a few more minutes to be with all this, so that's plenty of time for it to speak.

[Participant:] What he says is, it's different from sorrow. Not being able to do something. It's not sorrow.

[Russell:] It's not sorrow. It's — yeah.

[Participant:] It's a strong feeling of affiliation.

[Russell:] Affiliation.

[Participant:] Being a son of both my father and my mother.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] Nurture that, and really have that. It's not sorrow. It's —

[Participant:] It's a cousin — sorry. It's something that's different.

[Russell:] It's different. It's affiliation. It's a feeling of, you are the son of both of them, and you're connected to them, and there's this wanting to help. All of that, living together.

And let yourself have that.

[Participant:] I feel I can stay like that for a long time.

[Russell:] Yeah. Well, I think it's good. It's good.

Let — really, you know, we're going to end the session, but you can have this sense. And I'll use words that may be wrong, but there's some feeling of deep connection to them. And it's really touched. And to have that, and let that know you'll give it space and time. You'll come back to it, and be gentle with that deep connection that's feeling this change of life that they're going through, which is a change of life you're going through with them.

That's all living in there.

And you don't need to push anything away. We're just going to shift attention to feeling this good ground, even this good center.

[Participant:] But I can feel that I can't be with the sorrow and the anger without having my hands still.

[Russell:] And maybe — this might be wrong, but it sounds like the angry place has changed its name. It's a more — disarray. Did you say something like that?

[Participant:] Désarroi, in French, is disarray?

[Russell:] Disarray. Yeah, it's working itself into another state. That's something to do with the affiliation, something to do with the not being able to, the wanting. There's some part of that that is anger, but it's not just anger anymore. It's a lot more complex, and big, and wide.

Yeah, that has all of that in it, and we want all that space for it. Know that it has a new name, the next time you go visit it.

[Participant:] That's why I feel my ground, not very much, and it's already — I feel like it's helpful, being with the sorrow and the anger, the disarray.

[Russell:] Yes. It's something. It's still forming, and we don't need to label it yet. We just know that it's in process right now.

And just thank your inner life, that it has all this richness and capacity to speak, and to guide you into a deeper reality.

And as you feel ready, begin to let your attention — while you feel that there are people around, some sitting — when you feel ready, you can let your eyes open.

Keeping it company

[Russell:] Is it okay with you if we speak a little about it, or would you rather not?

[Participant:] Thank you.

[Russell:] Thank you. Well, I certainly don't want to do any kind of analyzing, or anything about his subject matter, but in terms of process — if there's anything that you want to comment on that seemed important for you, or that seemed confusing.

[Participant:] What I wanted to say is, it was really helpful. The process was, because I didn't know where I was going. And I felt a lot of support, helping me not to hurry. And that we didn't have to get it more rapidly, you know — having the freedom to just wait.

[Russell:] Yeah. Yeah, I can feel it in your energy now.

So much of what our inner world needs is the time and space to be what it is, and the awareness to let it do that. And then it's amazing. It's amazing.

Let me — I just got an email. Let me just see if this is — it's just perfect for what I was just — let me just see if this comes up, and then I'll take these other comments.

There's this quote from Gene that Ann Cornell is writing online, to respond to somebody. And she quotes Gene, in a quote that I had never heard. Of course it sounds very familiar, but I didn't know this particular quote.

So this is Gene, teaching focusing in 1989. You ready?

And of course he was a therapist, so the client and I —

[Participant:] What? He worked in —

[Russell:] Yeah. His main thing was philosophy. He still has clients.

[Participant:] Oh, yeah.

[Russell:] Listen to this language. The client and I, we are going to keep it, the place in there, company, as you would keep a scared child company.

You would not push on it, or argue with it, or pick it up, because it's too sore, it's scared, it's tense. You would just sit there quietly.

What that edge needs, to produce its own steps, is some kind of unobtrusive contact, unintrusive contact, or company.

It will. If you will go there with your awareness, and stay there, or return there, that is all it needs. It will do all the rest for you.

If you do not know that awareness is a process in itself, this will seem very mysterious. It needs you there, and that's all it needs.

But it's a very particular kind of being there. It's not aggressive. Not, you have to change. It's not, you have to learn something from me, or you have to —

It has time and space, and it wants to unfold. So interesting, the potency of that space.

Yes, please. I'm just going to turn on some lights, walking through. I'd love you to ask while I'm walking, because I can actually hear while I'm walking.

[Participant:] I would like to ask you. I'm curious if you ever actually touch somebody while they're focusing.

[Russell:] Well, sometimes. Yes, I sometimes do. It depends on my relationship with the person.

And sometimes, occasionally, I'll be doing an FI, I'll be doing a touch work process, and I'll be guiding somebody in focusing, like waves in the process. So sometimes I'm already touching, and then they're listening in and speaking in that way. And sometimes it becomes natural in that direction.

[Participant:] Like a better flow. Because my sense was not to ask the question, because it would be intrusive.

[Russell:] Right. The intrusiveness. That's what we need to be very conscious about, very cautious about, is really, really respecting the process that they're in.

And I guess you could ask that place.

[Participant:] Right. Absolutely.

[Russell:] Right. Yeah, please.

[Participant:] Kevin McEvenue, who comes from the Alexander Technique, developed what he calls whole body focusing. He often, in fact I think usually, or at least when I work with him, he touches people, in initiating especially. But he has a very unique way of working himself.

[Russell:] Thank you. Thank you. Just one or two, because I want you to be able to do one process before then.

Guiding from presence

[Participant:] I'm sensing I'm confused. In previous weeks, earlier, when we were introduced through Ann's literature, in a seminar, to more of her version of focusing, there was imagery, or some of the exercises. You were saying, okay, now I'm facilitating. You're reminding, and you can reflect, but don't take a next step to guide.

And what I understand now is another step would be — so am I exaggerating the importance? It seems like there's a flavor of what I felt yesterday, when I witnessed today, that you're delivering, you're consciously taking us further. But is that a distinction in your plan? I'm not kidding. You're actively involved in their focusing.

[Russell:] Right. Yeah, involved in a certain kind of interesting company, honoring their process, and offering some guiding suggestions.

[Participant:] Yes. Which is something that, you know, isn't different.

[Russell:] Yeah. I mean, it's a skill.

[Participant:] I think so. Yeah. Maybe.

[Russell:] But you notice that the ground is all a quality of connection, which is presence. That's the ground of the work, beginning, middle, and end.

Next, from that ground where you feel this connectedness, and they feel it, the next safest things are their language, reflecting back, helping them stay in their bodily process.

When all that's there, and the permission which I cleared at the beginning is there, then one can be free to suggest some movements of attention. They're movements of attention, right?

And so I'm not — notice the difference between a guiding that would be analytical, or me telling him any kind of meaning, and guiding his attention so he can discover something, and giving lots of permission for him not to follow my suggestion.

Okay? Great.

[Participant:] Question about direction. What we did before was finding a very powerful state.

[Russell:] Correct.

[Participant:] I'm not clear how that comes into this.

[Russell:] That's the background. That's the background. Rather than beginning your investigation of a challenging situation from maybe being scared of it, find your ground and your center first, and then enter it.

Don't try to — no, don't try to do it consciously. Just have that. You're coming in with more of yourself already. And now you're in a challenging situation.

You might find, as I think he might have found, that you have more capacity to be with challenging things, because in the background of you is your grounded, centered presence. You're not even trying to hold on to that. That's just elicited, and then —

[Participant:] So it's not scary.

[Russell:] Yeah. So isn't that interesting? That we can maybe use our skills of embodiment to create a kind of infrastructure that we don't then try to hold on to and say, I've got to be in that.

Although, if we're working with somebody with PTSD, or with severe trauma, we may want to, a number of times during the session, come back to that initial state, so that they can have some guidance in experiencing more challenging states with their resource.

Good.

Your own style

[Russell:] Okay, I'd like to go to your comment.

[Participant:] I do focusing all the time. I think you'd agree. So it's finding your own style. My focusing style is different than your focusing style, but I do it differently with every client, because they're in charge. So they're directing it, and I'm facilitating what they want, but I do have a focusing style.

And yours is different than it was before, or you're doing it different. And even Ann would say that. Look, even though she teaches a very specific way, she's always saying, you find your own style. So it's very open.

[Russell:] Right. Yeah, amazingly your own process to play with.

Right, and you're right. We each have a style, and the style changes with the person, and you're also right that I'm modeling in a different way than I modeled, consciously trying to pace what I was bringing in the room. So I'm giving more permission to how I work freely with people.

With your partner

[Russell:] Okay. Please go with your partner. The same partner.

Listen, I need your attention, just for another moment.

So, you're going to go with the same partner. Please take a few, maybe two minutes, to access the bodily state first. Just grounded, in the physical body, that we do all the time. Ground, feeling your legs, your knees, feeling your center, feeling your length, feeling your breath, then using your specific image, and the felt sense that comes from that image. That all takes a minute or two.

So you've got that kind of in the background, and then going into some challenging situation that's true in your life, that you want to learn about. And then you'll do a session around that.

Okay? And the session will be twenty-five minutes long, and I'm going to go tell them we're going to be ten minutes late. We're doing one person before dinner. So you'll have twenty-five minutes. I'm going to tell them we're going to be ten minutes late.