Movement lesson

Angela 2 — Week 5, Day 5, Session 3 — 27 minutes

Summary: Standing, Russell guides sensing of the heels, metatarsals, and lines of support through the feet. The group explores weight shifts on each foot, then shares what they notice. He links differentiation and reintegration to walking, and closes with a simple standing breath.

Standing and the ground

[Russell:] Since you're standing, hearing is part of standing.

So, feel a sense. As you feel the ground, you're taking in the sound.

I have a little more space over here.

And shifting your weight, I want to focus again on the feet and legs in this picture — that the breath and this ground are so helpful for our, could say, capacity to be present in difficulties.

And as we further differentiate and clarify our sense, we figure we can get more support spontaneously.

So feel the movement to the outer edges of your feet, to the inner edges. Feel that through your whole self, moving both to the outer edge and both to the inner edge. If possible, keep your toes down.

And if you're comfortable without shoes, I recommend getting a clearer sense of the floor. It's not essential. It's a recommendation.

Heels and the fourth metatarsal

Sense your heels. Having a good sense of your heels — those heel bones, the calcanei, calcaneus the singular — are very much like your sit bones in sitting.

Your heel bones take, you know, in most standing, more than 50% of the weight, unless you're really forward on your feet.

But Feldenkrais, when he looked at what he thought of as ideal standing, would speak about the heels. You know, the heel bone is quite long and it's really under the ankle, so the arch of the foot will send some forward, but significant amount into the heels.

Not that you want to be back on your heels, but maybe you can feel that your heels really come — feeling the weight in your heels will help you to sense the lines of support through your ankles, hips, shoulders, base of your neck, base of the skull, upward.

And then the toes, ideally, are not taking weight. They're not pressing the ground. So the metatarsals, that area under the toes, those take some weight.

The area of the fourth metatarsal — it's not the very outside of the foot, but under the fourth toe — is a very significant place for sensing the feet not collapsing down, that this area can have some weight, some presence.

And the weight on the heels is actually not — the heel is designed, I'll show you on the skeleton, so the weight is towards the outside of the heel. It's not just equal across the heels, so there's a slight outwardness in the way, or what's external from neutral. Lateral there, that takes the weight and helps to emphasize that fourth metatarsal.

And then, of course, there is weight also under that big toe, under that metatarsal there, but not collapsed down into it, ideally.

Shift your weight a little bit.

The right foot

Come into your right foot, your right heel. There'd be some bend in your knee, and come from the outside of your right heel. Draw a line up to your little toe.

So you're making a movement. The movement comes from your pelvis. But you're shifting your weight towards the little toe, and then back towards the heel. So you go from the outside of the heel, up the outside of the foot. You might be able to feel that fifth metatarsal.

And you come back, and then you go very slightly leftward on your heel. You're still right of neutral, and then go up, up, up, up, up through the fourth metatarsal to that fourth toe. Now this may not be very clear which toe is which, but use your awareness. It will grow over time.

So then you have some weight emphasizing the fourth toe. You come through that place under the fourth toe, fourth metatarsal, back to your heel.

Breathing is still good. Notice if you're clenching your hands.

Come to the middle of your heel and draw a line up the foot to the middle toe, going through that middle metatarsal area. And I don't expect that you can go, oh, that's that metatarsal and that's that one, but you're bringing your attention, looking for distinctions through there.

Coming back to the middle of your heel, coming slightly left of neutral, and coming up, up towards the second toe, through that second metatarsal, feeling weight towards that second toe, breathing, and then back, back, back to the left of center on your heel, and then the inside of your heel, going up the inside of the foot.

Through that first metatarsal to the big toe, and then back down the inside of the foot, around the whole heel to the outside of the heel, like a horseshoe. Go up the outside of the foot towards the little toe. Let the knee bend.

Breathing down, dropping down, coming down the outside of the foot to the outside of the heel, around the arc of the heel to the inside. Come up the inside of the foot to the big toe.

Breathing, letting go of unnecessary contractions, coming down the inside, come around to the middle of the heel. Come up the middle of your foot towards the middle toe.

Pause there for a moment. Feel that.

And go back to your heel. Now go just slightly right of center, slightly right of center on your heel, and slowly go up towards the fourth toe, letting the knee bend, letting the weight drop.

And then go a little bit back towards the heel so you can simultaneously feel weight on your heel and on the fourth metatarsal, or the area under your fourth toe, approximately.

And then let that go. And just walk a little bit. Sense what's alive through your whole right side, not just the foot, not just the leg. How your foot goes along the ground.

Pause for a moment.

What you notice

Some noticing. Let's get some words out there. We can help each other with our experiencing.

[Participant:] Integration.

[Russell:] Integration. Can you say more about — how you feel that integration?

[Participant:] Right side. That feels like spreading my body, like moving all the way up my body, and my hand there is moving as one.

[Russell:] So I'll say it out loud. From the right side, from the right foot, all the way up that side of your body, it's all moving as one, moving together.

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] Something else?

[Participant:] Differentiation.

[Russell:] Differentiation. Where are you sensing that? In your foot?

[Participant:] You can feel the different parts.

[Russell:] Nice.

[Participant:] I feel a lift.

[Russell:] A lift.

[Participant:] In my arch.

[Russell:] A lift in your arch.

[Participant:] A spreading base of support, the whole left foot.

[Russell:] So that — you point it to your right. You mean — I mean, yeah, okay. A spreading base of support in your whole right foot. Why?

[Participant:] It's more spread out. Not flat, but more spread out. More dynamic.

[Russell:] Nice word, yeah.

[Participant:] There's a fullness in my lower back, presence backward on the right side.

[Russell:] A fullness in the back on the right side of the lower back. That's interesting. I feel something like that as well.

[Participant:] Say it again.

[Participant:] More clarity.

[Russell:] More clarity.

[Participant:] Along the floor. And the right hip joint is greater clarity.

[Russell:] Stand on your right leg. Feel. Look at that foot. See if you can find your balance. Feel which parts of your foot you can feel, and then just stand on your left and see if there's a difference — difference in size, difference in—

And then we'll come to our circle once again.

Differentiation and reintegration

So, Feldenkrais had a — what we're working with here, theoretically, is a really important insight that for life to evolve — and this is true in the body, this is true in our inner life, it's true in our relationships, it's true socially, politically, and in terms of the cosmos. That's one principle of the evolution of life: greater differentiation allows a greater level of complexity.

That evolution is connected to differentiation and reintegration. Differentiation, reintegration. Differentiation, reintegration.

And that movement — and from what we're talking about this morning, we can think of the autonomous self as differentiating, and then integrating into the larger organism. That we are cells of a larger organism, and our differentiation as cells is important, and never to lose your connection to that larger. That's called cancer, when the individual cell loses connection to that larger organism.

And the same for — so differentiating our foot and the articulations allows a greater complexity of integration in our walking and in our use of ourselves in movement. Right, that's kind of central to all the lessons we do. And it's such a key principle of systems.

The left foot

So, come on to your left a little bit more and feel. Sense, is the heel present?

Can you feel something like the connection of your left hip to that heel?

And then if you extend that upward, could you feel into the base of your neck? For those who are familiar with this language, in through the transverse process of your first thoracic, as kind of a center where that meets the vertebra — how that area might be connected to this heel, and then up through the left occiput, through the top of your head.

Come to the outside of your left foot itself. Then drop back towards the outside of the left heel. And then up — draw a line from the outside of the left heel to the left small toe. And down the outside, around the arc of the heel and up the inside, towards that first metatarsal and the big toe.

Down the inside, breathing, letting go of the excess contractions, around the heel and up towards the small toe. Then back towards the outside of your heel, and then a little bit to the right of the outside. Draw a line up to the fourth metatarsal and the fourth toe, and down, down, down.

It's fine if you say — you're not expected to be precise. If you have a voice going on that says, I don't know if that's the fourth or the third or the second, that's okay. Just do your best to track it. That's how the awareness grows. You just need to participate.

Okay, then go to the middle of your left heel and go up the middle towards the third metatarsal, up towards the third toe. Down the middle, towards the middle of your heel. To the right of middle, up towards the second toe. From the second toe, back down a little right of middle, going through your whole foot.

And over to the inside of the heel, up the inside over the first metatarsal to the big toe. Down the inside, around the heel, and up the outside to the little toe.

And come just a little bit down towards that fifth metatarsal, so not so much weight on the toe, and from the fifth metatarsal, see if you can go to the fourth metatarsal. Just go slightly rightward, then go slightly lateral, slightly leftward, slightly rightward. This is an ankle movement, slightly leftward.

And then back to the fourth metatarsal, and bring weight back towards your heel, but keep some on that fourth metatarsal, so you feel simultaneously a little left of center on your heel and some presence in your fourth metatarsal.

And then come back, and then come onto both feet. Shift your weight, and come to standing, and feel the support from the ground through your whole torso.

Feel the presence of the heel, the top of your head towards the sky.

Both feet

Now with both feet, go to the outside of both heels, and then slightly back towards center on both heels. So it's like you're right of center on your right foot, left of center on your left foot, and go up towards the fourth toe on each foot, and back towards the area just right of center on your right foot, left of center on your left.

Feel the breath.

And then let your knees bend, let your stance widen a little bit, and go to the outside of both — inside, outside, just more light and quick. Inside, outside.

Both at the same time. Both outside at the same time, both inside. Both outside. So it's not going back and forth left and right. It's both outside, both inside.

The knees soften. That just goes through you, light and easy.

Coming forward

Bring your right foot forward. As you come forward, feel the movement from your heel towards your metatarsals. Now all the metatarsals can be involved, but that area around the fourth metatarsal — see if you can sense the weight through there. That's important for your support.

If the weight goes too quickly internal, you'll tend to fall a little bit. You'll lose some of that support. See if you can feel what I mean. That when the weight goes — if you go to the first metatarsal, can you feel how that begins to turn you and drop you? And then if you go out again, you actually lift up slightly. The leg rotates back and the hip is under you again.

You feel that. That may be obscure, or it may be something you can sense.

Yeah, so we're coming forward, some emphasis on the fourth metatarsal. And then feeling how, if you let the weight go to the inside, there's a slight twisting that begins in the pelvis and hip joint, and a shortening. And then as you come back out, it's like you unwind upward.

Can you get that picture? It's like a corkscrew down and an unwinding upward.

And feel that unwinding upward and just kind of be in that for a little bit. See if that can feel fine to be in.

[Participant:] So is that going on in the knee at that point?

[Russell:] Well, when you fold inward, the knee rotates inward. As you come out, the organization of the knee actually — it should go right through the knee.

Okay, come back.

Feel the standing.

Can you lift it forward? Move forward onto — a little emphasis on that fourth metatarsal. Doesn't mean that you're eliminating contact with the rest of the foot. You're just bringing more presence there.

And again, feel how shifting weight internally towards your first metatarsal kind of corkscrews you down a little bit. And then come up and out.

And then come back to your back foot. Forward. Coming up and out of your back. Letting that foot and leg and pelvis really lift you up and out. And back.

Forward enough. Bring the right foot forward. Forward enough. It's just kind of an odd walking forward.

Left foot forward. Feel from your heel to that little emphasis on that fourth metatarsal — how this — you're lifted out of that foot. There'll be a little give in the knee.

Right foot forward. Feel the heel slightly external, coming forward. And out of your foot, out of your pelvis.

And stand on both feet.

Just standing

Just standing, breathing in. Feel, I'm here. Breathing in the sounds, the air, the sense of being here, pausing, just enjoying being alive, the light, the sound, nothing to do, nothing to be.

Just here, and then letting go and feeling the air leaving. Little pause before the next inhale.

Let's go ahead inside.

Thank you.