Discussion

Angela 2 — Week 5, Day 6, Session 3 — 79 minutes

Summary: Russell teaches that freedom lives in taking responsibility for attention, not in controlling what appears. The group explores surface talk, longing for real connection, and small ways to meet without keeping score. A practice of grounded presence asks how one is without one's problems, then a brief floor exploration grounds that shift.

Responsibility for attention

[Participant:] Loyalty to our attention is the ultimate freedom.

[Russell:] Actually, what I said was, that's very close. I was saying, taking responsibility for your attention, which is loyalty. That is, to be loyal to your attention. But being responsible for your attention is where our freedom lives.

You know, that's from Buddha to Sartre to me, to the garbage man down the street.

It's like, whatever the circumstances, our experience will predominantly depend on how we're attending, and the stories we're telling ourselves about ourselves and the experience. The stories I call part of your attention.

If your attention gets pulled into the stories and you believe, you know, they are just bad people and they are doing this to me, you will have a certain experience. Not bad. That's human freedom. You have a right to create misery.

You have a right to see the very challenging circumstances and be gentle with the places that feel overwhelmed, and recognize, maybe I can also be in touch with something that is not subjugated to this experience.

We get the challenges. We each get the challenges to work with that. How much freedom can I allow?

And the freedom, again, what I keep emphasizing is back and forth. When we shift, we are absolutely these free beings right now, and within that big space of our being, there's room for our small, contracted, fearful, hurting places.

But as soon as I forget the totality of self and get absorbed in that particularity, suffering ensues.

Interestingly, even if I get absorbed in the particularity of how wonderful something is, the rug gets pulled out from under you. It doesn't stay that way.

[Participant:] This is probably self-evident, but I just want to make sure I'm understanding.

[Russell:] Yes.

[Participant:] Paying attention to our responsibility for our attention.

[Russell:] Right.

[Participant:] How we're paying attention, to what we're paying attention for. I mean, I've got this picture. There's all these little things in there, and if our attention is on all these little things, then we're distracted. But if our attention is wider, would you say?

[Russell:] Okay, okay, so that's one part of it. It's actually all the ways we can think of it. It's how you're giving your attention.

So you might give your attention to some little thing. We often need to give our attention to little things. And how am I giving my attention to that thing right now?

Right now — last week we experimented with getting somewhat more focused, or wider. You know, bigger picture, smaller picture. Your attention is mobile. And if you stay fixated in a certain way of attending, it tends to get stuck, whatever you're attending to.

So when the attention is mobile, as it is when we're flowing, then you have a flowing experience. I'm talking about how we pay attention, and what we're paying attention to. I'm including in that the stories we're telling ourselves about ourselves and about our situation. Situation includes the environment and any other people.

And one more piece.

No praise, no blame

[Russell:] It's important that we understand, both in everyday life and in meditation, we are not responsible for what appears.

When I say responsible for your attention, I don't mean you're responsible for creating each thought intentionally, or creating each feeling, or creating each sensation. It's not that old saw. You know, if you've got cancer, you made that from your thinking, or if you're having that bad experience. It's not that.

It's, what do you do once you notice what's there? How do you relate to the creation?

And then from that, you can take responsibility for your relationship to living, your relationship to what is.

And that is a radical position of saying, no blame.

Completely. It's no praise and no blame. You don't get gold stars either. There's nobody out there who's saying you're doing it good or bad. There's no praise, there's no blame. We're saying, is it possible for human beings like us to recognize that my experience is predominantly about how I'm holding my experience?

And yes, of course, there are situations that are very, very, very challenging.

Some of the heroes around are people who have exemplified themselves in these really challenging situations, who have somehow, through grace, stepped beyond the circumstance as the determinant of the quality of their life.

And again, I have to keep over and over saying, this does not at all say that somebody who's in chronic pain is not going to feel, often, like there's no way out, and feel subsumed by that. And their work is, how do I bring compassion to the place that feels there's no way out?

Can I get even an inch away, or a hair away, from that devastating feeling?

And if I can't, can I find even a little compassion, wherever we can find the care?

And as we practice that — and that's been the gift of me working with people who have been so hurting, who are having so many years of finding that there are possible gaps in these extremely challenging circumstances. And those gaps can get wider and narrower, and how one relates to oneself in those circumstances is very malleable.

When somebody is — that's enough.

On the surface

[Russell:] Okay. I've got a practice I'd like to do, but I just need to check in. Is there anything more from this morning, from the meditation, from the practice, anything that wants to come right now?

What's living?

[Participant:] You gotta laugh at me there.

[Russell:] Yes. A little louder.

[Participant:] Yes, yes, yes.

[Russell:] So boring to live in one world, isn't it?

[Participant:] Yeah. Yeah.

[Russell:] Oh, beautiful, creative consciousness. Absorption is wonderful when it's wonderful, when it's life-giving, and when it turns against itself — hopefully we have some flexibility in the attention.

[Participant:] Yeah.

This is not really a breakthrough statement, but I read again.

[Russell:] A little louder, please.

[Participant:] This is not a breakthrough experience, but it's just a statement.

[Russell:] I wanna pause a second.

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] 'Cause you're saying something that touched you, and you're minimizing it already.

I know, and it's okay, but I just wanna point out — I so enjoy your life energy, and it's okay if you let it come a little bit more forward when something's touched you.

[Participant:] The last few months, I've struggled with interacting with people in various situations. And when I was reading again this morning, the article by Romans, the statement says most of our conversation is a mutual conspiracy to keep us on the surface.

And that has really been bugging me the last few months, because I don't know how to kind of circumvent that. It's like, if I can get into a one-on-one, even then, it's just really hard, after being in the program for a while and trying to go a little bit deeper.

[Russell:] A little bit, right.

[Participant:] And people are just so —

[Russell:] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It's challenging.

[Participant:] It's challenging.

[Russell:] So all of a sudden you feel like you're a little different.

[Participant:] Yes. Yes.

[Russell:] Yes, I get it. I get it.

Living in a bigger territory

[Russell:] I wonder if, in feeling the kind of longing for that deepening connection, we can have both. The kind of longing — I really wish that could happen with this person, and this person, and this, or maybe in general.

And we can also, as I said to you the other day, I want to keep bringing it forward, celebrate that what's living in us is a knowing of what connectedness, what depth, feels like.

That at the moment of wanting its absence, sensing its absence and wanting it, in the large, is a doorway to the being that knows that. Knows deep connection, loves deep connection, feels the rightness of it.

And we don't only have to be with the temporal mind-body being who's feeling the deficit. We can also simultaneously experience the fullness, because that fullness is in you. You are deep to yourself in a moment like that.

And you can be flooded with the fullness of knowing. Your valuing of connectedness, your experience of connectedness. Your frustration — that's the other place. If you want to live there, you can. I recommend acknowledging that, but don't let that pull you as the dominant reality most of the time.

For brief periods, oh gosh, I really wish you could connect with me. Can I also have the place, the larger self, that's doing this again? That's taking the temporal mind-body and realizing that that's living within a larger being. That's returning to the blue sky without denying the longing and the place that's wanting.

So I'm saying, to live in a bigger territory is the invitation here. I'm not saying it's easy, but I'm saying that people like you and me can do it. It takes practice.

All the work we're doing is giving us some tools for not being so identified with that historical condition, and yet taking care of it kindly. Not denying it. Not doing the old spiritual thing of saying, since it's unreal, let's ignore it and just be positive or something.

It's a more sophisticated, more differentiated integration we're looking toward.

You're right. I mean, am I getting what I'm talking about?

And this is not pie in the sky. This is practice. This is coming into that sense of wholeness, of grounded, centered presence. Of seeing the contractions, but knowing the place that is before, after, and within the contractions. A place that's larger than the contraction.

Every time we do a true listening process, you're practicing being that presencing for something within you. And you're practicing languaging. So you get that practice, not just for therapeutic moments, or fixing up difficult situations, but as a way of living.

And every time that you sit and you see a thought structure, and you're a little bit outside of it, you're practicing being in the larger space.

And every time we're in a movement in which something opens in your body, there's this sense of something larger. The awareness that's noticing all that is larger than any particularity.

And so we keep practicing, practicing, practicing, so that we can be at home in the larger space without denying any of the temporal horizons.

[Participant:] So, a piece of what I'm hearing from what you're saying, in addition to the larger concept of holding space, is that that statement — most of our conversation, the conspiracy, keeps us on the surface — also applies to ourselves.

[Russell:] Yes.

[Participant:] We do the same thing to ourselves.

[Russell:] Yes, yes, yes.

[Participant:] We just realize that the compassion that we want to hold the other person, we have to hold ourselves, to get a little deeper.

[Russell:] That's right, that's right.

[Participant:] And permission sometimes to be on the surface? Sometimes we need a break from our depth? That's fine too?

[Russell:] That's somewhat what the sports page is for me, usually, although sometimes it brings me in. Sometimes it actually does. But there's a lot of moments where it's just kind of staying.

[Participant:] Can you explain how the sports page brings you into your day?

[Russell:] I'm saying most of the time it keeps me on the surface. But sometimes — the way that works is really quite specific. It works like mythic archetypes.

There'll be a story. It's just like the Odyssey, or it's just Ulysses doing something. It's just like somebody having this challenge, and they're going down, or they were the one who lost the game for the team, and I know what that feels like. They were the hero. I know what that is, and so that brings me to another place.

Now, not saying that that's why I go to the sports page. But that all happens also, sometimes. And some people relate to that. You do it in different ways. But I want to stay — this is juicy. I like it.

[Participant:] So, permission not to be in the depth, but also finding subtle ways of deepening, without demanding something from the other.

[Russell:] Inviting a deepening.

And what that is almost always about is me communicating something about myself in that moment.

Somebody has to be a little bit vulnerable to say something that's a notch under.

Sometimes it's not even that. Sometimes it's just — I have this experience a lot in stores, where I like to make contact. As I said before, connecting and contact are part of what gives life to my system often. A lot of people like less contact, and that's just as good. But for me, when I'm in the line at the store, sometimes there are these moments where we meet. Sometimes it's just eye contact.

Sometimes I'm just settled in my groundedness, and it's not uncommon for someone to pick up on that, and pause just that little bit longer. I'm not saying that I'm special here. I know you all do this too. But I'm pointing it out. If I'm not in a rush, and I'm not just getting through the line, if this is really my reality — which is the way I intend to live, and sometimes, or often, live — that this meeting has value to me.

There's a moment of settling, where we're not just rushing through. And that couple of seconds, or one to two seconds, can actually stay with me.

And in fact, the kind of gratitude practices that we've worked with — one of the ways I connect to life-giving moments is often through flashes of people's faces that I've met during that day. And sometimes it'll be the person who said, can I put that in a bag for you? And we stop for a moment, and there's a smile, or there's a look, or there's a something. And they'll come back to me later, or I'll bring them back later when I scan through my day, and I'll say, oh, I hope you're doing fine. And then my heart's open.

I don't know that it does anything for them. I don't know how that works. But I know that I feel more connected. Next time I see them, it's like they're part of my world.

I've got certain people in Whole Foods in Sebastopol that have no idea that I think of them every day. I send them good wishes, and then we see each other. And it doesn't necessarily have to be somebody I see over and over again. It can be. But radiating goodwill into the world is not just a concept.

And then there are often little opportunities. Like they have a picture of their kid someplace, or, oh, how old are you? A moment of interest in their life will often bring it down a notch.

Putting ourselves second

[Russell:] With people that I already have connection with, that I'm wanting deeper connection with — I think I used this example before.

I have a challenge with my brother, who doesn't slow down very much, and is very, very, very much divorced from his experience, except at certain moments where I guess he feels really safe. He'll not realize how long he's monologuing, and his kids joke about it, and his wife jokes about it, but no one stops him, because he kind of controls people with a lot of anger, and so it gets people very afraid of him.

But I have found it so interesting. He'll be talking on and on about something, and he goes into great detail, and I'll say — well, his name's Farrell. Farrell, just stop for a moment. Is what you said a couple of sentences ago, that really got my interest. Can we go slower?

And as soon as I express interest in him, he stops. I think he's used to people just kind of putting up with him.

And I can honestly say, although a lot of what he says doesn't have great interest, there's always something that touches me. Not because of the subject matter, but because it's important to him. So I'll find an entry point through their interest. And so even if it's something I'm not intrinsically interested in, that will be a meeting place.

I'm really very grateful that I have a very deep connection with my daughter. But if we're ever not connecting, which happens as we're reconnecting, or something's going on, it's most often anything that's got her interest. I'll bring my interest there. And then, say, oh, she's listening to a new CD. Oh, what is it in her voice that really gets you? Oh, that. I hear that. I get that.

Something, usually something that they're interested in.

So, in wanting connection, we need to put ourselves second, usually.

I don't have the whole Saint Francis prayer, but that's a beautiful model of it. Don't seek to be consoled, seek to console. Don't seek to be understood, seek to understand.

If we're not hurting in that moment, if we don't expect relationship to be equal — which is a really good concept to let go of.

[Participant:] Well, I mean, I wonder if when we tease that apart, it actually is equality.

[Russell:] Oh, it probably is. But what I'm suggesting — no doubt it is. Right, stop weighing. That's exactly it.

What I'm saying is, if we have the concept equality, or hey, I'm the one who's over, then let that go. I suggest it's not a helpful concept to have running your inner life, because that will fixate your attention in certain ways. And then you'll be going, how many times did they do that, and how many times did I do that, and that kind of counting.

Now, that doesn't mean we ignore our want and our longing.

[Participant:] It's capitalistic.

[Russell:] Right. It's businessman's love, is what Ram Dass called it. Life is a businessman's life.

[Participant:] I'd like to give an example, and it's my family. I have four siblings. We've been together thirty-plus years. No one ever asks about him. No one ever invites that curiosity.

And they're bright people. Bright brothers and sisters, but pretty interested in their lives. And anyway, for the first time, I saw him really engaged, talking to one of my brothers and my brother's daughter. And I'm like, wow, you were really talkative this time. We were out in nature. And he said, well, they were interested in me, so I have something to say. Otherwise, there's really not any point. I can listen. But anyway, that's a long time to wait.

I was thinking of the waiting. I think it was worth it. I think part of who he is came through. But I think there was a lot of years that got missed, and that makes me sad.

I don't need to promote my husband, but they're my family, and it just feels like — can't they? We've been very interested in them, and they — and it's not like it has to be fair, but sometimes that reluctance to connect is so entrenched. Or that sounds like a really negative word, but it's so patterned, that it's difficult to find entry points that are comfortable. You don't want to push yourself.

So I just appreciate — I really do appreciate this conversation, because I have a tendency to — I think it's very, personally, much easier to reach out and be with someone I don't know.

[Russell:] Oh, much easier.

[Participant:] The people that have historical patterns with me — there's a place of, well, this is how we are together. And so to show up differently, that doesn't register. And I realize it's not anybody's fault. It's just a matter of history. But anyway, I just put that out there.

And those are, to me, the more challenging, and those are the places I want to bring the work. I want to open the work up to people that I really care about, and people who have been in my life a long time. But because of patterned practices, habits — not only is it hard to break my habits, then we have habits.

[Russell:] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

[Participant:] So anyway, I'm thinking, maybe if I'm opening this up, maybe I could acknowledge that I have a habit of how I am, and I want to be differently. I mean, maybe I can say, I have a habit of how I am with you, and I might shift that a little bit. I mean, that would be —

[Russell:] That's beautiful. That's again connecting to that vulnerable place that we're talking about, that somebody opens a little bit. And that's lovely.

Historical relationships

[Russell:] Sometimes, for reasons we will never understand, it's just right that there is not much connection. There's nothing we can do.

And often it's just what you're saying. Being a little bit different, that you're willing. And it usually has to do with, as you're saying, each relationship has its own pattern that we're called into.

And if we have enough consciousness, and you can support each other in this, for a little bit more ground — it means, in the relationship, having a little bit more ground, and a little bit looking for moments, or inviting moments, where there can be a pause in the rhythm of the relationship.

So something like, oh, what you just said is really interesting to me. I want to really let that in.

Usually when you express interest in another, they're willing to pause.

And of course, it has to be authentic, that you have some interest in that. It doesn't have to be a lot of interest. It doesn't have to be a lot. It can be just a little bit. You don't have to say, I have a smidgen of interest.

A little interest. A little bit of the ocean includes the whole ocean. So a little bit of interest is interest.

Okay, so we don't have to use the weighing mind. From the point of view of being, there are no amounts. From the point of view of being, being doesn't count. Counting is a phenomenon of historical mind.

So a little bit of interest is interest. A little bit of love is love. A little bit of caring is caring. And we can go from that as a doorway.

And in fact, with historical relationships, it's usually smaller steps. Rather than a whole lot of interest, a smaller step. The only time that's not true, in my experience, are these great big doors that open around death. Around death, sometimes the closed door opens for a little while.

But we can have these little openings that invite more and more moments of contact. And then, if you have a moment where it's a little bit deeper contact, it is so helpful to say, as you're separating, that really touched me, those few minutes that we had there. That it's acknowledged. That it's underlined. That you both experienced some safety in a moment of deeper connection.

It's practicing ourselves in relationship. And it's also without trying to teach the other. Because if you go in there trying to teach, it's not going to work. They'll feel it.

But if you're modeling through your authentic longing for connectedness, and for contact, and whatever — this is a terrible way to say it, but it keeps coming up in my mind. It's like you can train the relationship. Go ahead.

[Participant:] And that's so happy that the moment came, because it's been coming so long. It's soothing.

[Russell:] No, nice, yeah.

[Participant:] Because it's like each call, verbal or energetic, whatever it is, is something coming from me, and then there's something coming from the other, and so then there's a resonance, a disharmony. So it's like, how do we tune? And then there's the music that comes, or the energy, and it might build over years.

And silence is a real response. You might put out something, and you might not get something back. Or if I'm in a historical place that's very much not wanting to answer somebody's, and how are you today? But I don't want to do that either. That's my response. That's my instrument's best utterance at the moment, inside me.

Anyway, I think that there's some kind of a way that we can tune. Listen.

[Russell:] Listening is the key to tuning. Listening is the key.

[Participant:] Okay.

[Russell:] Yes.

[Participant:] It was automatic. I automatically wrote it down, but it was really effective for me. Something that you said — someone else had said it, I think, and it was along these lines. For you to be what you ought to be, I need to be what I ought to be.

[Russell:] Right. That was from Martin Luther King, yesterday, yes.

[Participant:] Was it yesterday?

[Russell:] Yeah. I laid it out, and it's out on the table.

[Participant:] Thank you.

[Russell:] Yes. Yeah. Yeah, that's right. That's right.

We are a mutuality.

Are we ready?

[Participant:] Yeah.

I have this huge relief, and a sense of joy, that this is as important to everybody else as it is to me.

[Russell:] I hear you. I hear you.

Oh yeah, thank you for saying that.

[Participant:] Yeah, I want to echo that, and there's almost — it's like, wait, I don't want to leave this.

It brings up kind of what she pointed to, in her opening check-in. When it's not people who are coming as students, but the ones that are showing up in the kitchen. The moment-to-moment alive connection.

Yeah, it just feels like a potent edge that is really interesting.

And also, there's something, for the first time, in your response to him. The feeling of the what's missing, how that can be experienced as looking at what's there. That it's actually coming from the part that knows connection, knows the potential for connection. And I never got that before. It seems like it's always, what's missing is what's missing.

[Russell:] Right, right, right.

Being is fulfilled

[Russell:] And I brought that up a little bit day one, a little bit day two, and then left it, because it's really a theme that we're building towards, an important theme for week six. But I'll mention it right now.

This realization that I have — I'm not alone in this — that being is always fulfilled, and being is always here.

And it's a shift of attention to include that beingness that already has its needs met.

And to be big enough to include the places that are longing, and longing in relationship, and feel a deficit. To acknowledge and feel those places, but to know, not theoretically, but in our bodies, to also have the experience of that larger place.

So that more and more, as we tune into what is the need that's missing here, wanted here, we are kind of living in two levels. It may not at first be at the same time. It may be a kind of back and forth thing. But to have really good contact with, oh, when one is really tense, something inside knows what relaxation feels like. And that knowing doesn't have to be simply intellectual or theoretical, but can be a resource.

In fact, that's kind of a good segue into a practice. Go ahead.

[Participant:] This desire before — you may already be doing this, but there's a lot to take in.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant:] Can we take a minute or two?

[Russell:] That's what we're going to start with. Thank you. You're right in sync.

So, take a moment. Maybe close your eyes, and drop down, and just give a little time to sense all that's working in you right now. What is touched.

Touched can include a yes. Can include a confusion, or I don't know. How all this is living. The different ways that it's living in you.

And if there are certain insights, or feeling states, that would like to be acknowledged, just, oh, I know you're there. Hello there.

There are certain things that want you to go back to them later. Again, maybe something that feels important, that wants more time. Acknowledge.

And just take a few moments to feel your groundedness. Literally, your pelvis, your legs, feet. Your connection to what's under you. Not just feeling your body, also feeling the world under you. The pillow, the ground, the feet.

You are supported here.

And going into the centered. Feeling your pelvis, the center below your belly button there. There's breath dropping through there.

The breath down towards the bottom of the pelvis begins to connect centered and grounded together. So you have the pelvis, the legs, and the breath in the belly, all living together. And belly includes the back of the belly, the sacrum.

From this grounded centeredness, one can have presence for what's living.

So as we invite this, you might also connect with image. The more mythical, or outer, image that you had a couple of days ago. The model. Just very briefly, see if your body wants some of that.

You can connect with the image from yesterday, of your historical experience. A moment of meeting a challenge in presence. And briefly seeing, can some of that kind of be triggered in your body, in your brain, just with the image, or the words, or the sensations.

And as we're cultivating this grounded, centered presence, acknowledge any voices inside that say no. Maybe there's something that just doesn't want to be present. Everything is welcome in your presence, including the desire not to be present.

So there's a — everything is welcome, and nothing is pushed away.

If a voice says, I don't know if this is grounded, or am I centered enough, anything like that — oh, you're there. You're part of my moment of presencing right now. You are that larger space.

Another way of saying that, very helpful, as you continue to recycle the ground sensations, and maybe the images, is, is there anything in the way of you feeling fine right now?

Anything arises, just acknowledge that, and see, would it be okay to also feel fine with that there?

Just see. It doesn't have to be. It's not a demand. It's just acknowledging. Is anything in the way of you feeling fine?

And then invite your body to show you how it would feel if that wasn't there. If that was resolved. If that place, if there is a place that's in the way, let your body have at least a few moments of, how would it be in there? And is it willing to show you how it would be if that issue was resolved, or that sensation, or that whatever.

Then we'll go once again. Once again, you invite this presencing, this wholeness.

Let me see. Is there anything else in the way of you feeling — just for a few moments. It's not about the rest of the day. It's not about forever. It's just a few moments of feeling fine in yourself, for right now.

And if any thought, feeling, or sensation comes up that says, you can't feel fine with this, acknowledge it. Be next to it. See if wholeness can include that.

And then the next step is, let your body show you how it will be when that is resolved, when that is not weighing on you. And let those sensations come, if they want to.

And so one more time, we're just inviting this grounded, centered presence. Can also be called wholeness. Me at home, in my fullness, in my beingness.

If there feels like there's anything in the way of you just being at home, in the wholeness, in your presence, acknowledge it. Say hello to it.

First, notice if it would be okay for that to be there within the field of your wholeness.

And if it says no, acknowledge that.

And one last time, let your body show you. When I say body, let your inner life tell you how it would be if this was resolved, if this was integrated, if this was complete.

And just bathe in that for a few moments.

How am I without my problems

[Russell:] One last investigation, as you're cultivating this grounded, centered presence, this wholeness.

It's really asking, deeply yet gently, how am I?

How do I experience myself without my problems?

How do I experience myself without the stories of what's wrong with me?

What happens?

We're not throwing anything out. We're just having a few moments of experiencing. How am I?

See if that can become a felt sense.

And if words come to you, you can say some out loud, and we can all check our felt sense for someone else's words and see if they fit also.

How are you, without any problems, or without that old story about yourself? How are you? Just for a few moments, in your wholeness.

[Participant:] Freedom.

[Russell:] Freedom.

[Participant:] Held.

[Russell:] Held.

And when you hear the word, try it on in your body. See if there's resonance. If the word doesn't resonate, but something like it does, find the right word.

[Participant:] Vibrating space.

Filled deeply.

[Russell:] Filled deeply.

[Participant:] Grateful grace.

[Russell:] Grateful grace.

[Participant:] Natural.

[Russell:] When possible, include some bodily sensations for the feeling state, along with the feeling state.

When you sense into natural, what are some of the ways you know that, sensorily? It may be subtle.

[Participant:] Embraced.

[Russell:] Embraced.

Notice the sensations that let you know that embraced is the right word. Where do you sense something that resonates with embrace?

[Participant:] A tactile tingling, yeah.

[Russell:] It's good, good, good, to have the kind of infrastructure, or the substrate, of the feeling sense.

[Participant:] Fluidness.

[Russell:] Fluidness in the breath.

[Participant:] Laughter in my —

[Russell:] Laughter in your —

[Participant:] In my throat and in my chest.

[Russell:] Yeah.

Let's just take a few more moments to resonate. And if discomforts arise, or something says — a discounting voice, like, oh, I don't feel that, or is this real, or anything like that — acknowledge.

Welcome. And sense, would it be okay for that to be included in this spaciousness, in this beingness?

Would it be okay with that, for it to go to the side for a while? Dissolve for a while, knowing it can come back when it needs to?

That you can have these moments of absolute refreshment. You can drink from the well of being.

And it's important, when we do this kind of practice, that we're not pushing things away. That we just find there's space around anything. Even physical challenge. A thought that's unpleasant. There's so much space that we can enter who I am when that's either absent, or seen as relatively insignificant, for at least a few moments.

And then just notice if you could have your eyes open, and if you could sense your ground and your center, and that larger space.

Can you imagine — and this is not a demand, it's a true investigation. Can you at this moment imagine your home base, more and more often, being the larger space in which the historic patterns can come and go, and be seen, and taken care of as needed?

Can you imagine more and more moments where that feels natural? Where that feels so authentic and true, that the little voices that object to it seem like little voices?

Can you imagine that? Maybe not. Maybe there's a little, or maybe there's a maybe around that. Or maybe there's a kind of place that knows that that is possible, and that that is authentic, and that that is not make-believe, pie in the sky, wish I was, maybe someday, but is actually part of your possibility right now.

On the floor

[Russell:] And without setting up mats and everything, find a way to come to the floor. We're not gonna do a whole lesson. We're just grounding what we do in another way. So you don't need a lot of space. You just make it with as little disruption as you can.

[Silence 2 minutes]

So you're just taking a little time to let the ground support you. Feel your connection. Sense your breath.

[Silence 34 seconds]

Bring your feet to the floor.

So even right now, as you're lying here, it could very well be happening that the historic frames of reference are coming in, and the moments of experiencing you might have just had feel like something almost foreign, or temporary.

And it's this subtle yet profound shift of location of self that is a possibility at any moment.

It doesn't mean that your temporal self feels wonderful, or perfect, or anything. It just means that this being is also here, and that can be your ground, when it can be. And everything else can fit in that. And that shift makes all the difference in the world.

Just feel both feet on the floor, and press both feet, and lift your pelvis just a little bit, so you ground yourself by feeling your feet into the earth. Listen to where the pressures are taken on each foot, how they're taken through each foot.

And you do that a number of times. Your feet are just a little wider than your pelvis, and the heels kind of under the knees, not too far from your pelvis.

And lifting, and sensing the pattern of pressure through your legs and feet.

And intentionally use one foot about, oh, say seventy percent, and one about thirty, so it's significant, but not total. And feel which leg you used first.

And then when you go to use the other leg, notice, was the first leg somehow easier to do, or clearer, or not? And what's different about how you take weight into one leg?

That difference might be in your back. It might be that you hold your breath when you do one leg. It might be in the sensations in the buttocks.

So let your attention be free as you experiment with significantly more weight on one leg or on the other, and listen to how that pattern lives in you.

And if you find a distinction, and can say it out loud, that's helpful, 'cause that might help others to notice something they're not noticing yet.

[Participant:] My right leg felt very solid. My left leg felt really wobbly.

[Russell:] Okay, so there's a wobbliness — good word — in the left leg, and solid. And these kind of sensory words are really helpful. Solid and wobbly. So you just notice if there's any relationship to that.

And then, of course, once you feel the solid and wobbly, to feel more specificity. What makes that? What helps that to be more solid? What helps that to be more wobbly? That's how we further differentiate. We take the first as a doorway and we walk through.

Something else?

[Participant:] My left leg knows how to do it, likes it, enjoys it. My right leg, there's more of an effort. Less knowing.

[Russell:] More of an effort, less knowing. Yeah.

And again, when you have that kind of doorway, to then linger. Feldenkrais had the idea that one side of the brain can teach the other side, and that awareness can be the link. And so to get more specificity about what makes that a knowing, capable leg, and what makes that a not-knowing and uncertain leg.

[Participant:] That was the first time I tried to use my left leg seventy percent. It was actually my right leg doing it.

[Russell:] That's great. I love that. Nothing is hidden.

[Participant:] Yeah. My right leg, which feels more grounded, I can wiggle my right buttock like jello. But then when I go to the left side, which feels more unstable, my left buttock, as I try to wiggle it the same way, it's like really tight.

[Russell:] Yeah, interesting.

So it'd be really helpful to see if you can feel into how you're supporting yourself with that right leg. Feel where that support comes from that's not there on the left.

And one way to do that is lift a little bit less, so there's not so much demand on the left leg, and then to feel, where could I let that buttock go? And then does it fall to the ground, or where else could it get support? So you kind of play that edge of learning from side to side.

Oh, great discovery. Okay, so now from that, go slow and see, could you find a way to get more support for your left leg? And let your right side teach you about that.

[Participant:] And it took several times until I realized that.

[Russell:] Right, right.

[Participant:] And it was painful on my back. And when I let my left leg contribute, there's —

[Russell:] Well — that rings a bell. Yes. That is —

Really, patterns can be like, we're so familiar, and it's hard not to do. But with really listening, you go, oh, oh, I'm part of creating this thing.

[Participant:] Yes, yes.

[Russell:] Okay, okay, leave that. Lower your legs.

Lightly roll your head a little bit.

Pause.

Just here on the ground, your legs might be a little bit more present than usual. Feet might be there.

And just take a moment to open to the practice of, can I let myself have some seconds here of sensing how I am without my problems? How I am in my wholeness?

If without my problems doesn't work for you, think of, how am I when I sense my larger space, and my challenges as within that space?

So if your body is willing to let you have that kind of — call it wholeness, spaciousness — is there anything in the way of you feeling complete, whole, just for this moment?

Your problems will be waiting for you at the door. Don't worry. They won't send you out naked.

In just a few moments of letting your body bathe. Have some of that sustenance of beingness.

One last part of this. Roll to your side. Come to stand, please.

And I just wanna say, within this, if there's something that gets really scared when we're talking about this kind of shift, please acknowledge that place and take care of it.

We're not forcing anything, not pushing anything. We're inviting.

And something inside can sometimes feel like there's too much space. It's unknown. And we want to acknowledge that, as that comes.

Now, for this next practice, an integrating practice. For some of you it'll be better to be near a wall for balance. If you don't need the wall, don't use it. But it's better to use the wall than to feel like you're struggling to balance.

You need —

Okay, I'll wait. Okay, 'cause I don't want you to miss this.

So if you're feeling like you're gonna need the bathroom in the next ten minutes, use it now. If you can wait ten minutes, wait.