Movement lesson

Angela 2 — Week 5, Day 6, Session 4 — 17 minutes

Summary: Russell leads a short standing practice on three key places in the foot: the heel, the fourth metatarsal, and the space between the first and second. The group shifts weight, crosses the legs, and walks, then lies down to press the feet together in pairs.

Opening

[Russell:] So we're gonna do a short standing practice, and we're gonna gather together, hold together some of what we've been doing, and then you're gonna go into your threesome with focus. So that's gonna be how we're gonna finish the morning.

So please use a wall if balancing is a challenge. When you begin, notice what we're doing. I recommend, if you're comfortable, taking off your socks.

I don't know how well this works. Maybe someone hears me. So, we looked at this a little bit yesterday.

Three places in the foot

[Russell:] External — the way we feel, if you think of the middle of the foot coming down, is external to the middle. When you get that image in walking and understanding, it helps. It helps a lot for the weight forces moving through your body, and with your knees, joints, sacrum, back. I guess that's really the support here.

We talked about this, approximately the fourth metatarsal area that is key for taking weight. And then I mentioned it as the — pushing off the big toe. The actual key in standing, the key area I want you to begin sensing, is the space between the first and second metatarsal.

Sounds very precise, but it's this area, which is a key place for the pushing off as the weight goes towards the big toe. It's the flexibility between here and here. That is the real key movement.

[Participant:] So, instead of standing, concentrate as opposed to the fourth?

[Russell:] No, no. I'm saying the three key points. I mean, sense everything. I'm just pointing out further differentiation is the heel.

The heel taking fifty, sixty percent of your weight in standing is key. When you're coming in walking or running, to have a good sense of your heel, to feel your heel giving you a real lift. You have the down and the up.

For example, what heels tend to do when you get tired and you get really flat, right? And you're not supporting on your heels the way you can. If you can have your heel more in your consciousness, your walking will lift your head out of your spine.

So, here, here, here. It's like a triangle of key areas.

[Participant:] Excuse me? The bubbling spring in Tai Chi, or — I don't know the bubbling spring.

[Russell:] Sorry, I think I need — what is bubbling spring?

[Participant:] It's some acupuncture point, you know, just between the first and second.

[Russell:] Could well be.

There's a series of lessons I don't think we're going to do in our last week, as usual, but it's a really nice series of lessons around squatting that really —

[Participant:] Only by somebody who can squat.

Into daily life

[Russell:] Okay, so to be cultivating an awareness of these places is very helpful. Building this blessing.

Hopefully, with everything — with the four-phase breathing, with the ground, with the bending — my deep hope is that that's becoming part of your life, and that you're standing in the kitchen waiting for the pot to boil and you're kind of curious, and that you're bringing it in.

It's not enough to do it a couple of times. Some of it might live in you, but you're responsible for your education. I'm giving you some keys for your inner work.

[Participant:] Does the pressure feel a little bit toward the outside? It's supposed to be?

[Russell:] Okay. Supposed to — I mean, there will be people, given their histories, that will be a little bit more central, but I've helped many people develop arches that haven't had arches.

Shifting the weight

[Russell:] Let's stand up.

And so, let's just start with going to the outside, but now when you go to the outside, emphasize the sense of the heel and the fourth metatarsal. You might take a little bit over towards the fifth and the little toe, but let's be more precise and come, kind of feel this, almost a line from the heel to the fourth metatarsal.

And then shifting internally, not all the way across, but towards that space between the first and second. See if you can feel a movement that's a little bit smaller than beyond your outside, beyond your inside. It's a little more subtle.

Breathing.

[Participant:] Both feet.

[Russell:] Huh?

[Participant:] Both feet.

[Russell:] Both feet.

[Participant:] Heels are towards the inside too, or heels are still?

[Russell:] The heels will move a little bit inward, but they won't really go — they'll go more to the center of the heel.

Right leg crossed over left

[Russell:] Now, cross your right leg over your left leg. This is where the balancing issues can come from.

[Participant:] Huh?

[Russell:] It's the right.

Okay, so this again is really great integrative work, hemispheric work. It's really interesting what comes from you. And kids often like to play like this. Brings a lot of balancing issues also.

So, first we're going to think of the forward foot, and feel the standing, and just begin to go forward and back predominantly. On the right foot.

And again, key here is that you're sensing your shoulders are free, your arms — you're not balancing with your hands getting stiff. Your jaw is at ease. Your head is free to turn and look around, and you're going forward and back. You see?

[Participant:] Back foot?

[Russell:] Huh?

[Participant:] Or just on the — to the back foot?

[Russell:] To the back foot.

And then as you go forward on that right, feel the heel to that fourth metatarsal, and come back to the heel — I'm sorry, yes. Feel the heel towards the fourth metatarsal, the fourth metatarsal over between the first and second, back to the fourth, back to the heel, and then bringing weight towards your left foot.

Okay, so come to the right heel, feel the line up to the fourth metatarsal, checking in, breathing, going across the metatarsals. Just a few times, go back and forth across the metatarsals.

Front foot, front foot, yeah, right foot. And as you go, see if it's possible not to collapse into the first. The first will tend to draw the weight. See if you can stay just to the right of that space under the big toe.

That's it. The first is near the big toe.

Feel that movement, and then come back, come onto both.

By the way, did anybody have any slight strains in their lower leg from the work yesterday? Anybody have that this morning? Good, sometimes that happens for people.

[Participant:] Well, I just got an image when going back and forth. Like being on a sailboat, being out and seeing all the horizon in front of me.

Walking

[Russell:] Okay, walk a little bit. Just feel the pattern and pressure along the foot.

See if you can actually sense in your walking that movement that's — it's like, if you think of it, if you look at my hand, it's got this kind of a —

So many of us crash into the ground, and those crashes are so violent in our lower backs. When that heel strike hits with progression and then the rest of the foot is kind of flat, it's really like not having shock absorbers.

[Participant:] When your foot comes down, do you want it to kind of come from the outside?

[Russell:] Not quite that much, but yes, it is from the outside, but not — yeah, more like that. Okay, yeah.

Left foot forward

[Russell:] Okay, let's come back. Bring the left foot in front of the right.

A little bend in the knee, your arms are easy.

It's really important for this to be a learning experience that you don't feel unsafe. So if you're precarious and you bounce, be near a wall so your nervous system's not having to go — because the kind of learning we're doing requires a sense of safety.

Okay, and then first just forward and back on that, any part of the foot that you feel, so mostly the left foot. When you come all the way back, you can feel the right foot take weight, but we're mostly focusing on the left foot. And you're breathing.

And then feel from the outside of the left heel towards the fourth metatarsal, and then back to the heel, and then towards the fourth metatarsal. And then from the fourth metatarsal to the space between the first and second, ideally not collapsing into that ball of your foot, just to the left of that, and then over towards the fourth, and then over. So it's this movement. You can feel it in your knee. Can you feel it in your hip?

Can you feel that movement of your hip when you go across there? That's a very important movement.

And your ankle, and if you notice, you might even be able to feel the shift in your lower back.

Good, and then come back towards your right foot, and then from the heel of the left to the fourth metatarsal, over to the space between the second and first, back to the fourth, back to the heel, heel to fourth. Just do that kind of pattern a few times.

And it's very — you're able to smile. Where the hell did I get here in my life? Isn't my left foot supposed to be on the left side of my body? My brain says, huh? That's not where it's supposed to be.

[Participant:] How much weight is in the back foot? Very little?

[Russell:] Little. Yeah, enough for balance, you know, maybe twenty percent, thirty percent.

[Participant:] Is it more on the upper, the front part?

[Russell:] It's going through the whole of the back foot.

[Participant:] Is it wherever?

[Russell:] Wherever. Yeah, we're focused more on the left foot. The right foot's just for balance.

Good, then come onto both feet again and feel how your standing comes out of the ground.

You feel that lifts you up, doesn't it? You can see it. You can just see your whole spine comes out of your foot. Walk a little bit.

Pressing the feet

[Russell:] Okay, so I have a fun final practice here. I think it's fun. We'll see what you think.

It's your choice. You might like socks on. It's your choice.

Okay, so you've got socks on. So just in case you do want socks, lie down on the floor. So this is my partner. Bend your leg. Lift your left foot.

And we're gonna press against each other — not trying to — we're cooperating. Let's press into our heels. And even if one foot is larger than that, it's okay.

And then press into the fourth metatarsal area. Between the first and second. And breathing. And then back to the fourth, and back to the heel, and to all.

And let's push. Push toward each other. If either one feels it's too much, they do a little less. The idea is to feel the vitality of the leg, the connections up, that you can be soft in your upper body and still be pushing through the leg and breathing.

And just slightly less — just slight — that's perfect. Make sure your head is free, your jaw's at ease, but you're awake in your leg and foot.

Okay. And we'll do that. Thank you. And then you'll feel that. Feel what happens. Then we'll do the other leg. Then you can do both legs.

No, you're gonna do it yourself, and just be clear that you're cooperating. So if you need somebody — could you give me a little bit more pressure? I can't quite feel that — or back off, a little bit much.

Okay. So are you pushing it?