Talk

Angela 2 — Week 5, Day 7, Session 4 — 22 minutes

Summary: At the close of the week, Russell speaks to the challenge of the in-between time and the need to take responsibility for one's own learning, including practice and connection with the Sangha. He sketches a continuity of meditation, embodied listening, and everyday presence, then invites the group outside to stand in a circle.

The in-between time

So, coming to the end of such a rich time, one of the, I think, great challenges of this kind of learning is, in the in-between time, it really asks for you to be really responsible for your learning.

In other words, it would be on one level a lot easier if we had a weekly phone call, or I gave you assignments and sent back, gave you things to do on a regular basis, and we— That could be wonderful. It's not what this course is.

So that asks you. And I recommend, as a consultant to your learning process— of course you know the practices that I think are most essential, helpful, and something about, for most of you, not maybe for everybody, but something about connectedness to others in the Sangha, with some kind of, whether it's phone sessions or reading group, or—

You could— any of you could call a conference call and there could be three of you on it. You can create a subject you're interested in. You could, and we could give you the numbers to do that with. We could use the student conferencing call line, the number that you could—

I just encourage you, in the experience you're having now, many of you are having now, of this value of the connectivity and the pretty rare and unique qualities that are living amongst us, to access that in between.

I encourage— because one of the things that gets difficult is when you feel so isolated in this.

I recommend, for those who can work with auditory learning, to use the resource of the materials.

A larger space

And this taste that many of you are getting of— he's not kidding. He's talking about this turning over the historical identity, not making historical identity better.

That also happens, but that's not what we're doing fundamentally. We're creating access and confidence in a larger space in which that's living.

So that's a whole different level. It's not not also moving the furniture around, cleaning up the house, so to speak.

Getting a sense of that whole space that the houses live in— realize, oh, this is here. Even when I feel trapped in the bathroom and I can't get out. It's a larger space. In my house.

Is that happening? Has that been a problem? No, I was just using the image of a house. I'm trying to think of the smallest space in a house.

I'm thinking of somebody thinking that. You know what it feels like when you feel stuck in part of your history. It feels like— right?

And it's so easy to— I can almost guarantee that at some point in the next day, week, month, or some time, you're gonna go, oh.

The real world

This will feel unreal, and that will feel real.

I'm not saying that that doesn't have a reality in that, but this will feel like, oh yeah, I can have that quality when I'm in retreat and everyone— and I'm being fed and I'm in a group, and— but now I'm back to the real world, is what some voice is going to say.

I encourage you to question that voice, about the use of the word real for one thing, and to really actively investigate what does it take to have gaps in the contractions? What does it take to open the space? What does it take to celebrate more what you're already enjoying? What does it take to feel into the fulfillment that's living behind the longing?

That's gonna be a big theme of our work next time, when we're opening that space.

Continuity

I had a kind of picture I wanted to bring you, but I'm kinda thinking it's too much to bring in right— I'll give a very brief. If you're full up, don't, but I'm gonna start here likely next time, or probably second day next time.

Give you a preview, okay? It's kinda where we are in our process now, and we take off from here. We gotta go back a little bit, then we'll— so probably second day.

But I want you to see the continuity of what is emphasized in the meditation. What is— that's kind of over here. What is emphasized over here in embodied listening or focusing, and this space in the middle, which is where I'm hoping that you will be living more often in your everyday life.

So it's a picture. I'm not talking about the things we're doing. I'm talking about a relationship.

Let me continue, and then if you have a question of where is Feldenkrais and all that, at the end, bring it to me.

Meditation

So, in the meditation world, there's a strong emphasis on the blue sky and noticing the clouds. It's just a sense of noticing, but gathering confidence in that vastness, sometimes called the emptiness, sometimes called the all, sometimes called— that's called water.

But having confidence in the beingness that is you, that larger process that your everyday self is living in. And that comes not from belief, but from a bodily experience of spaciousness.

And that even if nine tenths or ninety-nine percent of your moments are full of thoughts about the future and past, that you have some gaps, some seeing, and at least moments of dropping, dropping, dropping. That hopefully gets more known to you, and you get more confident in it.

So on one side, there's the emphasis on the large space, with an acknowledging of what appears.

Embodied listening

We go all the way over here to the embodied listening. And nothing has changed, in the sense the large space is there. We're functioning from the large space, but now we're saying we can learn from the arising.

We can learn from the temporal self experience in that moment, and help it unwind itself back into the all.

It's like being with an ice cube in the river of your life and letting it melt back into the earth.

But it takes— so now we're following a thread, a conditioned thread, a temporal thread, a thread that some spiritual traditions go, don't spend your time there. It's unreal. It's just an emotion. It's just a reaction. It's not who you are.

All that's true. What we're saying is there's value in— that every piece of you has value. And that we're gonna pull on that thread so that its intrinsic value and energy can return to the whole.

And you feel then in harmony in that realm as well.

So there's nothing in this that is contradictory to this. It's a different emphasis.

The middle

Now, in this middle realm is the realm where we are living our everyday life, and hopefully resourcing the qualities of beingness as we are engaged in our life.

So this means more pausing. It's not pausing so much that you're going into a focusing session and you're working with something, or spending a lot of time with something. This is usually briefer, could be anywhere from a few seconds to ten minutes, like we just did.

In this in-between realm, you're acknowledging any of the contractions that are living in you. You're not denying them.

But if possible, you're in— No. You're inviting your body, and seeing if it is possible for you to have those contracted states and not be dominated by them.

That you're inviting your presence in, even when something is not feeling great inside. Pain in the body, a constriction in relationship. You're not denying that that's going on, but you're being with it in a different way.

You're calling upon your grounded, centered presence as a resource. You're calling on any images that help you as a resource, and you're not forcing your body. You gotta be like, you're inviting.

Do you want to remember that even in this difficult moment, your wholeness, your groundedness, your harmony, your ease, that that's all you want? Do you want that now?

It can be things like, how would you like to be in this moment? Or how will you be when you can be? How would you be if you could be?

And you wait a couple of seconds, and there may be a little release. There may be a big release. There may be a real inner shift, or it may be just a little bit of water on a parched road.

And that's not bad. A little water on a parched throat. Not bad.

But sometimes it actually opens, and something inside remembers, oh, I'm making a much bigger deal out of something that's passing.

Oh, right, I'm still here.

And as you have that experience, either just the little water on a parched throat experience gives you confidence that there is possibility here. Just even though it's a little bit of health, something inside feels— I'm not gonna be drowning in this forever.

And if you get— as you do it more, and you get these larger openings, you start realizing, oh, I forgot who I am.

Oh, far, hello there. Hi, you're back. Oh.

Wow, yeah, it's really hard when they talk like that. It hurts. But I'm here.

Okay, let me— got my ground again. Oh, yeah, that's still there. I'll give you some attention later. I don't have time now.

Let me feel the space around. Oh, image helps. Something just wants to laugh, and so, whatever.

You get in touch with something that's more than the contracted part of yourself.

When we go unconscious, we get hijacked by the contracted part. Right?

So— the balance here is that we're not going into avoidance of the difficulty. We're not pushing it down. We're not like that, but we're also saying, well, just because that's there, it doesn't have to dominate my experience.

Is that true? We're investigating it, really. Right?

The drawing

So I'm going to give you a little picture of it, just to give you a— I drew a little picture this morning. This is kind of hot off the press. It's not a good picture, in that I can't draw, but Karen could make a great picture.

Okay, so this is the beginning of a teaching. It has to do with this continuity. This dotted line is a sense of— don't try to read the whole thing, follow me through it. This dotted line has a sense of continuity.

And this world of meditation, which emphasizes beingness as the image of the blue sky. What do we do with things? We acknowledge them. We return to presence. The emphasis is on the vastness, emptiness, openness, spaciousness of experiencing.

Right? Again, there are some traditions that would just say, this is all you need, just live here. And that's beautiful. People tend not to be so great in relationships. Hearts can close here. There are traps all over the place.

Then we go to the far end of the place, and now we're in the attitude of learning from something. And this is embodied listening, or focusing.

And here, whereas the image for this is the blue sky, one key word here is that now there's something that we're giving our attention to, and we're staying with. We're staying with it so that we're— another expression we could have here, we're staying with, is keeping company with.

I really like that I got from Anne. Keeping company with.

And here has that sense of we're following a thread of what's living in us. And we're trusting the living process.

That's what's so amazingly wonderful to me, is to find out that your living process is reliable and trustworthy. What it needs is your presence.

And you feel, okay, if it's not the right thread, that thread will lead you to the right thread. So you don't really have to— oh, should I be focusing on that or that? I mean, if you're honest with your process, it will guide you to what's ready to be unfolded.

Oh, that's so good. We don't have to be smart.

So we have on one side this beingness, the meditation, the big space is what's emphasized. And if you're not doing your practices, where you're starting to get more familiar with this, it gets much harder. So to get on your cushion is the best way I know to have that dream deep drop thing.

We've got on this side, really spending time with something and following it through.

And then in the middle, where we tend to live, is the emphasis on a practice of being present in my life, presencing in my life, where I have the sense of living with my resources. So that means I'm reminding myself of who I am without my problems.

And within that space, there's room for any difficulties that want to arise. But I don't fall for the story that I am that problem, or I'm worthless until I figure that problem out, or any of that stuff.

Requires a lot of pausing during the day, moments of pausing, and remembering.

This includes a lot of gratitude moments.

This is shifting the I out of the stories you're telling yourself, being loyal to the I, and being responsible for your attention. So you're shifting.

Even if it feels like just brief moments, because there's something really strong in you, it's still— it's like opening the windows to a stuffy room.

Even if you're still in your room and it's still stuffy, there's some new air moving through it, if you can just pause and acknowledge what's there.

So, what I'm trying to express by this drawing is a sense of continuity of relationships to your inner world, in which it is the emphasis on the vast space, just by itself, with acknowledging anything that moves through it.

There's the ability to really bring our warmheartedness to anything living in the space, and giving it the attention that it needs.

And there's this learning to live in everyday life more connected to our grounded, centered presence, like our celebration of all that we're given all the time.

Not waiting

Not waiting for you till everything is just right to let yourself feel joyful.

And what starts happening— Linda just really— it would get so long— she just really got this, and it's part of why she's so excited.

She goes, you know, you have all this bliss so often, I'm starting to feel it. It was from after the week at large, like she's getting what the spaces do.

And she's saying, I don't have to wait.

It's like bliss sounds like a big word, but when you drop all the way, you have it.

And it's okay that it goes away. Don't make that mean that you devalue that it was there, or that that moment was real, or of value.

Because then you get more and more of these moments where everything is fine, and you still have to work this thing out.

You don't wait till it's all worked out to feel fine.

Standing in a circle

I want to do one more thing.

I just want to go outside and stand in a circle.