Talk

Angela 2 — Week 6, Day 4, Session 5 — 38 minutes

Summary: Russell sketches a beach afternoon that would still leave time to sit, then brings the group back to the present. He teaches neutralize and being time as ways to stay in the moment without being carried off, and the group reflects on going into feeling while staying with ground. They form new triads to continue yesterday's process.

A beach, and still a session

[Russell:] You guys want to go to the beach?

[Participant:] Right. And shorts.

[Russell:] Well, I did think of an idea. An alternative. It's a way of going to a beautiful beach, but not missing out on a session, or at least a condensed session that I would like to do here.

So this is what it would look like. A, we don't need to do anything. We can just continue with our usual schedule. B, we could go to a beach and do it differently than I'm describing. Or C, this might sound good to you. Or none of the above. Or go to a different beach, or not go to the beach, go to San Francisco, or go visit, or just this. We could just sit for the whole afternoon.

[Participant:] Whoa.

[Russell:] Yeah.

So. What I have researched is, a lot of you have heard, I'm guessing, of a really gorgeous beach called Point Reyes National Seashore. There's a beach called Limantour, which is a really beautiful long beach there. And I thought it would be too far, but according to Google Maps, it's thirty-five minutes.

[Participant:] Huh? Are you sure?

[Russell:] Oh, okay, so it's an hour. Okay, great. I'll look at it again. I thought it said — I was shocked.

[Participant:] You know, maybe from town. It's a long drive out.

[Russell:] Okay, okay.

[Participant:] So it depends on the hour.

[Russell:] Okay. Well, that could change the plan, but thanks — no, don't — that's helpful information.

So this was the idea anyway. Well, I could modify it. We could have lunch fifteen minutes early, have lunch at 12:15. Pretty easily be out of here by 1, don't you think?

[Participant:] Right?

[Russell:] And this would be Tuesday. And then we could be out at the beach at 2. We could spend a couple of hours out there, be back by five, and at least do an hour, and have dinner a little bit late, like 6:15, if that's fine for them.

And at least I would like, especially if there's a plan tomorrow evening, Tuesday evening, to do some offerings, some play, some song. I don't know if you're thinking of that, but that's something else you can think about, if we want to do that.

Then, if we're going to do that, I'd want to get a good walk, sit, walk in before dinner. So we could do that, 5:15 to 6:15, kind of thing. That would give us a couple hours at the beach. We'd still be able to get a good round of sitting in. So that's a possibility.

And you all can ruminate. We don't have to decide now. And have it open.

[Participant:] Yeah. Is it — does it have the tendency to be as windy as —?

[Participant:] I don't know it as well either. I haven't been there probably in years.

[Participant:] Yeah, is it as windy?

[Participant:] I would guess it must be as windy as anywhere. It's wild, and there are dunes and estuaries — the ones where, at the estuaries, you can protect yourself from the direct ocean. Which, of course, on the other side of the dunes, sand and ocean. And it's a long, long stretch in either direction. And then at the end of the paved road, I mean, there's a chosen path.

So the question is, are we going to need to be able to hear each other?

[Russell:] No. My thought is probably just to have it be an open time out there.

[Participant:] Oh, it's great out.

[Russell:] I mean, it's really a gorgeous beach, and you can talk, and if you want to do a process, you do it. But I would organize the day to do a process earlier.

[Participant:] Huh?

[Participant:] Yeah, nice to do some gestures out there together.

[Russell:] I would love that, before we left or when we arrived.

[Participant:] No. No.

[Participant:] It was — yeah, great for walking. And then the estuary is a very large back one.

[Participant:] I don't know what an estuary is.

[Participant:] Oh. You must be a person who doesn't know what an estuary is.

Anyway, subject to tidal influence: a body of water, marshland, mudflats, exposed. Lot of life. Lot of life.

[Participant:] Huh?

[Participant:] Well, you know, we find out when we get there, but it's not known for a whole hour or anything.

[Russell:] Okay, so back to — yeah, so I will inquire tomorrow, once you've had a chance of working with her.

Pause a moment.

Somehow bringing up the conversation brings up the end, and I'm not ready for that, on numerous levels. So I just want, for myself, and invite us all, to just come back to sitting right here.

There's a lot of opportunity in these next couple of days that I want to enjoy together.

Neutralize and being time

[Russell:] So, for me, one version of neutralize is coming back — ground, sound, breath — where I'm not carried away by what I'm bringing into this moment. But I can see it. And I'm not carried away by where I'm going, but I might know it.

Neutralize is that actual state of finding how I can be in the midst of time, in which there always is a place I've been and some place I'm going, sometimes predictable, sometimes not.

So that's always occurring. But how can I be in this moment and not be carrying the conversations, the disappointments, the excitements, or the anticipations — not carrying them in a way that's pulling me out of this moment.

But at the same time, not trying to carve out this moment away from those, because that's not living. That's not the way we live. We are in time, and we are free from time, both. We need these different relationships to time. I need these different relationships to time.

You know what you've heard me call before: linear time, or the time of the mind, and the time being. Being time.

The famous treatise from Dogen Zenji called Being Time. Being Time.

It's a beautiful phrase in English, because it connotes — it's being time, and it's the being time, the time being. It's got a lot in it. So it's a beautiful one to —

In my papers, did I ever give you a transcript of a talk I gave on the time being at Zen Center? Did you ever see it?

[Participant:] Maybe not.

[Russell:] I gotta look for it.

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] Yeah. Now I've got a number of transcripts from Dharma talks at Zen Center, from like ten and fifteen years ago, that are much more — this is when I was in robes and talking Zen talk.

[Participant:] Yeah, yeah, the laugh was still there.

[Russell:] But this real big question for every one of us around time. And it is, in some ways, an exquisite lens for modern humanity.

I think you've heard me say — in a way it's a little bit of a joke, but it's not — what sex was to Freud, and power was in the eighties, I think time is to us now. I think it's that central an issue.

Almost everybody I meet feels they don't have enough time, or it's not their time, or they feel pulled by time, or they've got too much time. But it seems such a central lens.

And I think it's connected to — we could extrapolate it out to the technological age, and how we have digital watches, that time has become — to make a little bit of a joke — so present.

So, one of the reasons pausing, and ground, sound, breath, are so important to me, and one of the reasons I emphasize the depth of the present moment and not the shortness of it, is because we're entering a different dimension.

And to be skillful, I've learned it's not what I used to try to do, which was keep out the past and future. That's there. But I've neutralized within it and through it, into the deeper time.

Through acknowledging where I've been. By being current with my inner life. That's why checking in briefly but frequently is so helpful. How is it in there? So that I stay up to date in my inner life. It's not a cumulative process, where there are layers upon layers that haven't been listened to for a long time.

And noticing what's in front of me. I like to see in my calendar what's coming up. Otherwise, if I try to blot that out, something's working on it. So I notice that, but then I orient into presence — when needed, with these intentional pauses — to neutralize.

And in neutralizing, I become available. And that availability is available also to, in my experience, a larger wisdom that is both in me and around me.

Remember: wisdom is in me, and I am in wisdom. Wisdom is in me, and I am in wisdom.

So the more I am in being time, yet conscious of linear time, the more I'm at that crossroads — literal crossroads. My experience is, the more available I am to surprise, to something moving.

Yeah, I used the example at lunch. This morning I got up early, and I was home, and took a shower, and I didn't want to wear my same purple t-shirt back. And I forgot to take a new t-shirt, so I went and got one out of the drawer, didn't really pay much attention, put it on, and it was, we're all in this together.

And then — oh, we were talking about interaffecting this morning, and interbeing, and how it's just so congruent. Just a silly little example of what tends to happen when that congruence is there.

And I think for me, that relationship to time is an important way of inviting that congruency.

Checking in

[Russell:] So I wanted to check in with my friend Pete for a second. Can we talk a little bit — or not?

Well, I want you to check in, because I know sure would be your usual answer, so I want to take a minute.

Is there anything you want to say first?

[Participant:] I surrender.

[Russell:] Well, it's a joke, but it's not. You — yeah, yeah.

[Participant:] If you leave doors closed for a long period of time, then you open them, and they get overwhelmed. As you just said, if you want to focus on the present, you can subliminally react, really fast, or be thinking about the future. And it takes away from you.

[Russell:] I want to put a corollary in there. If there is stuff that's pulling you out of the present because it's piled up, it's a really good idea to give it as much attention, in the present moment, now. That can allow it what it needs to free you and free itself.

[Participant:] So, repair the minor dents in the car before it becomes a complete wreck?

[Russell:] No. There's that too.

Also, maybe the situation that we're in is — what's there is helpful to be present with, even if it's being carried in. And we don't want to use the present moment as a way of avoiding painful places. Because it will keep the present moment from being as full and rich as it can be.

[Participant:] Yes.

[Russell:] So that's more what it is.

[Participant:] Huh?

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant:] It reminds me of a phrase from a — the Rumi poem. Oh my God, I'm sorry, I'm speaking over.

Something about: learn to recognize the counterfeit coins that bring you a moment's pleasure, but leave you broke. Drag you for days like a broken man behind a farting camel.

[Russell:] Don't forget that.

Next time you want to use your avoidant dog, take a whiff.

So I'd like to make just a couple of comments, and then if there are any questions, have them.

It would be wonderful if there is any indication that talking about this is kind of taking something away, to just let us know that. I suspect that would be challenging. But if it came in, even an inkling of that, I would love that from you. If it feels enhancing, great. If it feels neutral, great.

Going in, with ground

[Russell:] So I want to just make a couple of comments, because there was something a little bit different that I would like on the table. And if it's confusing or anything, any questions about it. And then if there's anything else that you want, before we get into our groups. We don't want to take too long with this, because I want you to have ample time.

You might have noticed that I was encouraging Pete to go into the feeling that was occurring, and not just say hello to it and let it know. I had him also saying hello, and letting it know that he was there, but there were more invitations to go inside, balanced by reminders of the chair, and that it was safe to go in there.

So I want to comment about that.

If someone easily experiences their feelings — maybe sometimes gets pulled away, or frequently gets pulled away, by their feelings — the being next to, acknowledging, saying hello to, is a very, very important emphasis. The into language is what they're used to, and not as helpful, in my experience.

Now, if somebody is fairly skilled at staying away from the feeling, and it feels, because of your relationship, because of knowing them a little bit — well, it's safe for them to go further in there. But they need some encouragement. And they also need reminders of ground, that give a sense of confidence to go further in.

And so, knowing Pete, and knowing some of the life situation, there's a sense that I had of, oh, I want to encourage this. Knowing that it's hard, historically, for him to allow those feeling states. And just really wanting to recognize that there can be great value in just letting a feeling be there. And crying with it, or yelling with it, or doing what you need to do with it.

And it's especially wonderful if you can also have a kind of ground state, so that you can experience. Now this sounds funny in language, but you might know what I mean.

You can be — you've heard me call it inwith. It's like within, but inwith. It's a simultaneous sense of being in the feeling, and having the larger space with you while you're in the feeling. That you're really in the feeling, but you somehow feel some connection to this something larger. It doesn't feel dangerous. You don't actually feel carried away. You feel carried in. Something like that.

[Participant:] Yeah. That's the first time I've ever felt the need to refocus, to reach out beyond the interior, to have a sense of the exterior, to have a reference to refer to.

[Russell:] Yeah. Yeah.

And it's great that we've developed these skills, and we keep developing these skills, so they become available to us, so that we can go deeper, in ways that feel like there's forward movement in there.

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

[Russell:] Yeah, it's part of why the first embodied aspect we work with is ground, and we never go a day without it.

[Participant:] It just reminds me of being able to sit in the fire.

[Russell:] Yeah. And turn toward, and go toward.

[Participant:] Yes. Whatever.

[Russell:] Yeah, yes.

[Participant:] I was thinking about this thought, deep, and our fear — my fear of deep. This deep is like, you go in and you're gonna drown, never come back.

And I had an image of a well, and a bucket, and going deep, with the bucket on a rope, and bringing that clarity back up.

[Russell:] Yes, yeah, nice. That's interesting.

[Participant:] So it counters the fear of going in, never back.

[Russell:] Yeah, yeah.

[Participant:] Kind of inside out.

[Russell:] Yeah. That's interesting.

[Participant:] I had a rope also. Very tethered to a rope, going.

[Russell:] Yeah. Yes.

Anything else that might be helpful for you to either ask about or comment on?

Lightly

[Participant:] Yeah. I'd like to just offer the word. I've been working with this word, lightly. And to me, it's just had a lot more nuance than I would have expected. Everything is dark and bright, more porous, more space.

And anyway, one of the qualities of our three connected conversations was that we went deep, but in the community of sharing, it didn't feel heavy or scary or dark. And it was deep.

And there was a quality of — I'm going to use the word light, but it was not — I need another village that uses light in more ways than we do.

[Russell:] Right, yeah. Yeah.

[Participant:] And so it was important, but not so serious.

[Russell:] Yeah, yeah.

[Participant:] And there was a workability that really — there were no solutions, but the possibility of workability was opened up.

[Russell:] Yes, beautiful. Yeah.

[Participant:] So I just feel that maybe it was the right time to offer that to the mystery. You know, it was just — it was rich.

[Russell:] Yes, yes, yes.

[Participant:] Different ways to reach us.

[Russell:] Yes. Yeah. Yeah, it's really important to me what you're saying right now.

That atmosphere of workability, of possibility, is again — to use the phrase I was using this morning — for me, where solutions find us. Where there's space. And it's not light in the sense of frivolous, or unimportant. It's deep, but without that extra layer of heavy.

[Participant:] It's rare.

[Russell:] Go ahead.

[Participant:] In one of Bob's — he came back and he was telling me about this practice that he did with the teacher. And he was saying, you know, that you started to offer that too, again, when we went over the mudras, walking. And his teacher said, hold the mudra like you had a little baby bird in your hand.

And maybe other people felt less of that. Lightly, lightly, tenderly. And so that — I get kind of clutched on stuff. So that's a metaphor for me, for my mind. I can be with something different.

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

[Participant:] I just wanted to say thank you, Pete. That was really — just thanks for letting us witness. Because I was gonna weep, just saying how courageous that was, just to go there privately, let alone to have a group of people around you. And it was really good.

[Participant:] Yeah, I just briefly started a process. I hitchhiked on that process. And I just decided to follow it down, much the way we were doing yesterday, kind of tracking. It was a kind of multitasking, tracking the current thing, but also my own thing at the same time. And I think it was very rich.

[Russell:] Yeah.

New triads

[Russell:] Okay, so I want to continue our process from yesterday. No — I want to have different triads.

And the way I would like to suggest that is, the people who were number ones yesterday, stand up.

[Participant:] Maybe.

[Russell:] And I'd like two people to join each of these people, who were not with them yesterday. So you go in to a new person. And there'll be one extra person, so we're going to have one group of four. But find your group of three first. You gotta be with people who you were not with yesterday.

Okay, Valerie's a one. Valerie's a one.

Okay, so you guys need one more. What was your third? Oh, there. Those shorts.

Okay, so there's one extra person, is that true? Is everybody in a group? Okay, so join a group that doesn't have someone you were with yesterday.

[Participant:] Yes, okay.

[Russell:] So yeah, you guys are going to have a four. There's one extra person.

I had the impression, from most of the groups yesterday — a couple spoke to me, and a couple I just noticed — one group felt pretty finished in the timeframe, and other groups felt pushed at the end. So I want to allow a little bit more time.

So that means we'll go to six o'clock. Yesterday you had an hour and forty-five minutes. Today you'll have an hour and fifty minutes.

Well, no, that's not true. Wait a second. I spoke at the beginning. We started at four, and we ended at five — no. Yesterday you had an hour and thirty-five minutes. Today you get an hour and fifty minutes. You get fifteen more minutes today. That's significant, right? I mean, that'll give you enough time to use your notes if you want to.

So listen, this is my recommendation. When you finish the same process as yesterday — I don't have to go into the details of that. When the first person finishes for the second time, then you really reflect together, starting with the first person's process: discoveries, what you learned.

Each person can speak about their own process, process discoveries. If you have questions about someone else's process, you can ask questions. Learn about process from each other. Get clues for yourself.

And then if you have time, and it's interesting to you, go through the transcript and just look for some of the key moments of shifts, or something that happened you're interested in. And don't just go to that line. Go to the previous few moments leading up to that moment, so you get some sense of what occurred there.

The last thing you can do is any places where any of the three might have felt, I wouldn't have known how to respond in that moment. Let's come up with some other ideas for that kind of moment. What you might say. And then share possibilities. So you get more choices.

Okay, got it?

So we're not going to go in the meditation room, because that's a silent room. We can have a group outside, if a group wants to be outside. A couple of groups in here, a couple of groups in here. Can be a group out back.

A new number one. There's a new number one.

[Participant:] No, okay.

[Participant:] Okay, yes.

[Russell:] Right, right. Yeah, we've got an extra person here.

No, we're just going to go to dinner at six. We'll go to dinner at six.