Discussion

Angela 2 — Week 6, Day 5, Session 2 — 119 minutes

Summary: Russell opens with a short settling, then a Father's Day story of dream, family, and friendship that turns toward interaffecting and the paradox of self and no-self. The group learns from the threesomes — gesture, metaphor, wisdom body — and from steps of safety, tolerance, and forgiveness. A long exchange makes room for a tiny, tired place.

Settling

[Russell:] I have a few things I'd like to go into. I want to spend some time going back to our threesomes yesterday, to continue learning from those processes.

But before we do that, I've got two other things. One is a story I want to tell you from my day yesterday that was very impactful for me. I want to do that after we do the first thing. So I'm going in backwards order.

The first thing is, I'd love you to just close your eyes for a moment. Just drop down and find your sense of being on this spot — that kind of more neutral ground that can welcome what comes.

Notice. Sit. Not particularly absorbed in anything other than that you're here, and weight, and sounds, and breath, and other noticings.

A little bit paradoxical, but we come into the body to be in the larger space. Which is interesting, because the space we're entering is larger than the body, but we come into the body to be in the larger space. The larger space where everything can come and go without identity, without holding or pushing.

The body is a doorway to presence, and presence is a doorway to the larger space.

Just reflect into the experiences in the meditation this morning, working with the image of sitting for others. That touched — not saying it should have, but for some people it might have. And if so, what occurred with that?

Returning to the practice last night of just taking moments and vivifying them with some attention. Sensory rich. Inviting and remembering.

And other things that are alive, not particularly connected to our threesomes process — if we can segment that a little bit — just seeing what's alive, what's moving. Just taking a moment to acknowledge it.

And take a few minutes with observations, questions, from those things that were just invited.

[Silence 58 seconds]

[Participant A:] I want for the healing of practice to bring you love, a loving heart, no matter what, so the heart can stay open.

[Silence 36 seconds]

[Russell:] But I'm going to go ahead with my story. If anything else wants to come, there's always time.

A Father's Day

[Russell:] So. I was realizing last night, and then I went out early this morning, and was just kind of awed by the interconnecting and interaffecting. Which often awes me, but sometimes it awes the awe.

So I thought I would share some of this experience of Father's Day.

I was at home. I slept at home Saturday night, and woke up with a very strong dream snippet that I didn't remember till last evening's meditation. Often when I meditate, my dreams come back, because I enter a similar level, or go through a similar level, within. I don't know if you've experienced that. Not uncommon that, especially between about one and three minutes into my meditation, I often go through a zone that's a kind of dream level, and dreams from the previous night will appear.

Some of this will have clear, easy meaning for you. Some of it won't, because of some history. But it was very connected to my friend Pete, who I happened to have that opportunity to guide through the session that you all observed.

So it's Father's Day. And I wake up with this dream, and Pete's driving a motorcycle. When we first met, shortly after, he had gotten a very fast motorcycle, because he likes speed. I think it was a Kawasaki — some sort of very fast motorcycle. So he had a motorcycle, these low handlebars, and I'm sitting on the back of his motorcycle, sidesaddle.

It's kind of weird, because I don't know where my legs are, but I'm clearly sitting sidesaddle. He's facing this way. I'm facing this way. And we're about to go over the Golden Gate Bridge.

And there's been some sort of incredible car accident, but more like a bomb had gone off, or some big thing happened. It wasn't an earthquake, but some big thing happened. And the cars on the Golden Gate Bridge were all jammed together. They were all crashed.

And he's driving this motorcycle pretty fast through these cars. And then we're all the way on the left-hand side. We're going south on the Golden Gate Bridge, so we should be on the right. We're all the way on the left.

And he's somehow — I'm going, we have to crash into this. Oh, and he gets around that one. Then we get around this one. Then we come to one where it's just horizontal to us. And no, that's not quite it. Yeah, it was horizontal to us.

But then this burly guy, who I know who it was, but I've never met him. This burly guy, kind of a cigar-chomping, kind of military, kind of Ernest Borgnine type, who didn't shave recently. And he reaches in with a hand and pulls the car out of the way so we could go by.

And I go by him and I shake his hand. And it's this big, meaty, beefy guy hand. A guy who's seen a lot, done a lot. Worked with cars, and he could just lift this car and take it out of the way.

And I happen to know, just as a sidelight, that this is somebody Pete has a lot of connection with, is experiencing a lot of pain around, and they work together on cars, and he was in the military. He's the guy, and I knew he was the guy in the dream. I've never met him, but I know it was the guy.

And so I shake his hand going by. We continue down the Golden Gate Bridge, and Pete continues to navigate. We somehow get to the end, and the dream ends.

Okay, so I wake up with that. That's my snippet.

So next thing, I realize, oh, I didn't take home any clean T-shirt to wear, and I've been wearing my purple shirt for a couple of days, so I wanted to get a new T-shirt. So I reach in my drawer and I pick out the We Are All Connected. Right? So that was interesting to me.

And then I go up and I get an email from my daughter. Not a happy Father's Day, but just wanted you to know. She's in Europe. Her job is being a chaperone to thirty undergraduate business students around Europe. And she's responsible for their safety, and transportation, and stuff.

And so she just wanted us to know: I've been up for the last thirty-six hours, two ambulance rides, taking one of my charges who fell and broke his jaw. First to one hospital in Bern, and then another hospital in Bern, and he needs to get surgery, and I had to fill out the insurance, get in touch with his parents. And this guy's never been away from home, so I'm just staying — I've got a hotel room, but I don't want to leave him alone.

And she's being really responsible, in the way that I know she can be.

So I'm reading this, and I have to give a little footnote. I was given, in the previous couple of days, a kind of insight that there are sometimes ways — at least I was working with it internally — sometimes ways in which a paternalistic masculine quality in me, that I love and value, can go off. In subtle ways of being overprotective, or diminishing the power of someone. So I've been investigating that. How can I make this subtle distinction between those?

And so here I'm reading my daughter's email, and I realize there's an initial, is she okay? And then there's, oh, kind of her dream trip to Switzerland, because Switzerland was the part she was really looking forward to. Whereas, oh, she's not going to have that.

There was an initial kind of — but then I realize, she's fine. She's fine. She's doing her trip. This is her job. And she'll do it well. And she is so capable. And how wonderful.

And I don't know if it was connected to that investigation, but I could feel the distinction between the part of me that kind of wanted to protect her and not have her experience that, and then the part that could clearly see that she was fine in what was happening, and feel some regret that she wasn't getting to walk up the Jungfrau that she was hoping to do.

And so this is all before five o'clock in the morning.

There are a few other things. I don't want to make this too long. I already have? Okay, that's not bad.

So I drive here, and I feel immediately, just as strong as I mentioned, I think, in the group, a strong connection to Robert, and to the sense of, isn't it perfect? We've had some interaction over the years around kids, around different things. That he is with his grandson on this day just felt like such a completion of something in me, from the stories I've heard. I don't know if it was for you, but for me there was something very whole in that.

And then coming to seeing Pete — not remembering the dream consciously at all — but seeing Pete, and seeing what seemed like the challenges he was living with yesterday particularly, and having that time together.

It's interesting. Pete on the motorcycle. I'm going to say some things about you. Pete's very, very, very skilled in dealing with the world, dealing with the material world. He's very good. He's built houses. In the sanctuary, if you notice the benches on the side, these beautiful wooden benches — he's made those. Really beautiful space. He just deals with the world.

And our relationship together has been much about his skills in the outer world helping me do certain things, and my skills in the inner world helping him. And there's kind of been these two sides. And we've had this connection for a long, long time.

And we also connect as fathers and daughters. And I know a daughter of his who's having a lot of troubles right now, who I've met a number of times and worked with a little bit years ago.

And so something in all that layering together, on this Father's Day.

So I was already feeling very full when I got back to my room, and my daughter also, to just complete that round. Just happy Father's Day. I go, how is it? Well, it's not the trip I hoped I'd have, but I've got a great book, and I didn't know this guy so well before, and he's a nice guy, and he's so scared, and it's good to just be able to help somebody feel better.

And I just felt the very positive side of fatherly pride in how she was approaching her situation.

The other thing is, I don't know if you remember, but in the morning, where we began our conversation, was all about the interaffecting of each other in those groups of threes. And that interaffecting, and we are all in this together, is very resonant for me. So all of that.

I awoke feeling so grateful for the larger forces that work through us. I have no specific cosmology about how that occurs, no name for it, except that I know deeply, unequivocally, that I am not a separate being only.

And the interaffecting is what, in Gene's terms, we are interaction first. We don't bring ourselves here first. We are interaction, and we form out of that, and into that, and out of that.

And when that gets to be a deep bodily experience, there's less tendency to need to defend your historical self. Your historical self is here to learn, and it needs to be able to feel whatever feelings it needs to feel. And we can still have enough access to the ground in this larger space that it feels safe to let it learn, let it go through its confusions and clarifications.

And that helps each of us to bring the individual gift that we're here to bring — not because we're individuals, but we are, but we're not. Our gift comes out of the interaffecting, and is created by — we are created by the interaffecting. But paradoxically, that doesn't mean we're all the same, or that there isn't something that you can bring that no one else can bring.

The realization of self is the realization of no self, and they exist as one. And when we experience that over and over and over, you begin to get some kind of confidence in how life will move through you, and your responsibility for doing your best to return to the cushion — as a metaphor for your life. To return to presence. To work with those places that just don't want to be alive, that just want to be asleep, and not to force them, but to find the unpredictable, inestimable power of our love.

There is so much more working through us than we can think, than we can imagine. And to get confidence in that, and to work with that, to co-create with that. To find that magical place between knowing we are carried and supported, and allowing that, and pulling up our own britches and doing our work, so that we can be carried and supported, so we can do our —

Fatherhood

[Participant B:] Thanks for asking.

During the quiet time just before this, you asked — no, forget the question — to come forward with what it's like. Not sure why I was upset. I was going to say — anyway, I was very reluctant to share how impactful having this retreat on Father's Day is.

And your comments about the interaction, our interrelationship — I didn't really get it till you started talking, because I felt it was really my issue, and my stuff. And so I wasn't going to talk about the impact of fatherhood, because we've never really had a gender piece to our retreat. And I just didn't know if the energy would — there's not a lot of us guys here, so I didn't really want to focus on it.

But in listening to what you said, I'm right where you are, in parts of your day, and the impact of fatherhood. Not that it's different, or better. It's just how it impacted me.

Even to the extent that it was part of our focusing yesterday in our threesome, because we had three guys, slightly by intention. And so I just want to affirm that what you're saying — I need to listen to it, and it isn't just my stuff. It's really very much.

It's been very interesting to do a retreat not about fatherhood, but a retreat in general about life, over the weekend of Father's Day, and getting these messages and issues that just bring it all to the forefront.

I appreciate your comments. Thanks.

[Russell:] And oh, you know what you're reminding me of right now? Do you remember what you said to me? What came in there?

[Participant B:] Yeah, I almost added that just now. I left out the final thought that came to me yesterday. I elected to keep it to myself, but essentially it was the same thing as what I just said, almost. The ride is over.

[Russell:] Well, if you feel okay about it, give some context for how that's very meaningful. Encouraging you to.

[Participant B:] Part of the challenge that I've been working with personally, and the significant support, is a sensation of my world in recent years — that the ride is almost over. That the lights

are being slowly turned out. That the equipment is slowly giving out. That the abilities are past their prime. And at the same time, family members have been passing with frequency.

So putting it all together into a package, it's tempting to arrive at the conclusion that the ride is approaching the terminal. And sometimes that gets to be a pretty heavy notion.

I'll add here that I can say, all the years I've known him, I have never thrown a problem at him where he doesn't come back with something that surprises me. And always in an insightful way.

So you can get at it, and yesterday, past the loss and the attendant loneliness, get down to the base of that and just get a glimpse past the rather substantial door that was there. The notion that, on the other side of the door, the lights aren't out. That there's more, as we said, and there's more.

The ride is not over. But if you could stay on the right side.

[Russell:] The only client I've ever had who parks down the road, back in Corte Madera, and says, wanna see my sports car? Wanna see my racing car?

Yeah, it was like, what kind of — you had it on your trailer. So I say he's a fast driver. I'm talking racetrack driver. Any cars like mine were just a little bit smaller, and a whole lot less expensive. Yeah, I raced them up and down the West Coast.

Oh, just that. It's a long thing. He's got his truck and he's got this long trailer. It's the first time I've ever had a client come up and say, if you want to go down the hill, you can see my race car.

[Participant B:] I've never known where the right lane is. I never know where the right lane is. Scared.

Fierce grace

[Participant C:] I was sitting over here and just seeing you with Pete. There's a lot to receiving, and it's such a gift for you to allow that relationship, and your own worth, to be shared.

Well, first of all, some of the patterns that we learn about men at work together is that they do shoulder to shoulder work. Because to face one another is combat. And so in general, there's a discomfort of face to face. And so perhaps even the focusing, in inner work, is closed eyes, and less challenging.

But this was face to face. Pure masculine intimacy. And all I could see was fierce grace. There was that sort of quality.

So anyway, I just feel like I'd like to offer that to our sharing. I just bow, as a woman, to be privileged to see the gift in men, and to realize that's not scary. But we don't see it often. And so I just want to thank you.

Learning from the threesomes

[Russell:] So maybe it would be a good time to reflect back on our groups yesterday. And if something else arises, that's fine. But to think of your threesome.

I'm, of course, not interested really — unless you think it's really helpful — I'm not so interested in content, but in learning about process. What happened in your process could be learning about the process of the process. Were there ways that you could use the written work helpfully? Do you need some more guidance in that?

Were there ways in which others processed that taught you something about processing? Either processing as a speaker, or as a listener?

So I want to help the group mind learn from each other.

Yes, please.

[Participant E:] Yesterday's process, for me, has been a part of the whole week. And the theme of the week for me has been: I'm the center of the universe, and everything is here for me. And at the same time, there's no distinction. I am here for everything.

And there's something been really big about that. And even in that process, in the moment, and it keeps unfolding for me.

The experience I had was that these two incredible people here were something like individuals, and yet even a part of me. As they spoke, it was almost something like me came out. And yet I saw them both separately, in their wholeness.

[Russell:] Yes, yes, yes.

[Participant E:] That's a shift for me.

[Russell:] Yeah. Maybe even just pause there, just to let that — because that's huge, for all of us. This is what we're working with. We are part of each other. We also have this individuality, or autonomy, and we are elements of each other.

[Participant E:] And there's something about not having to do it all myself. Something big about all of that.

And gesture was a big part. It was so big. It was fast. And when it's me, it's pretty small.

[Russell:] Your gestures just now. You often say, it was so big and fast, coming like this. She just did this — so big and fast, right to her. And when it's me, it's just —

Thank you.

[Participant D:] That's interesting. Yeah. I support that idea, yes.

[Russell:] I just want to — everyone's welcome, and I want to particularly invite those who are a little bit shyer in their speaking, to maybe see if there's something that's germinating, and there's a little sense of that shy place. Just notice if it might feel all right to even say, yeah, I want something to say, and then wait. It may not be right there. We can take our time.

So I want there to be space for those for whom the words are more challenging.

Gesture

[Participant F:] Just finding the triad to be highly effective. Even the different layers of just focusing with another. I feel more supported from the other two people being there — not just physically, but energetically. And my process becomes alive even more. I have more access.

My suggestion was, I wanted to hear from both, not just from one. And then it felt like, even though I knew the other person was there, there was more of a completion. There was more of this interconnectedness.

[Russell:] So while you were focusing, they could respond. They could each companion you.

[Participant F:] And it felt full to me. And I was doing this a lot, and it felt like I was bringing them in. It wasn't just about me.

And to reiterate, I was having these moments of the gestures. I found myself gesturing more, almost, than speaking. Speaking, of course. But I realized the power of the gestures. Almost the gestures had their own words. I could just be in gesture. And I found that to be highly effective for me.

[Russell:] Yes. Beautiful.

I want to just underline these comments about gesture, because for me, there's a pretty good argument that language comes through gesture. The bees are a good example. But language — if we think of sound becoming words — before words developed, there's gesturing, there's movement. There's an interconnecting of how we want to communicate, and how much communication grows out of our body and gets refined.

But then we can enter an age, like we're in now, where for so many, the language gets disconnected from the rest of the self. So gesture, for many of us, is a more direct connection to what the inner life is saying.

And it's really helpful to bring that into your awareness of yourself. And certainly when you're companioning, that's something I don't have to pay attention to anymore. It's just in the field of noticing, because it's so important to me.

My first ever — I'll get there in one second. At my first ever Gestalt session, I was nineteen, at Esalen, and I'm sitting there talking about how much I really love my brother. And it was Julian Silverman, and he goes, can you feel your head?

Yeah.

[Participant F:] So in our session, I was working with a concept about space. So we did whole body focusing. I stood up, and the other two people played with space, and what that word meant in my body. It was really — we got quite big and loud, unfortunately. But it was really, and actually, it's okay if I say I was working with you.

[Russell:] Well, anyway, whole body focusing was a really good option, because it was a whole body experience with that word, and it was nice to have two other people to interact with.

[Participant F:] Well, I can remind — we're like, hold on, you're focusing, we don't know about that. She said, you do it sitting down, with your gestures. You're just going to stand up. The invitation to do it was so gracefully offered.

[Russell:] Oh, we already know? All right. That's a nice way to think, that there is this inner knowing.

[Participant F:] So, it's just simpler.

[Russell:] Yeah. It gives a tickle, wanting to speak. Settle down.

A wisdom child

[Participant G:] The interaffecting pieces were brilliant yesterday, I think.

Father's Day, for me, was also a lot about that father energy you were talking about. Some of the situations that were discussed in our group had, for me, also the piece of being overprotected from an outer force, or the situation in my life of giving up power to something outside of me. But it was from the other side. That wasn't the situation I was talking about, but it was in the room.

And then the other thing was the interconnectivity with the other trio in the room.

[Russell:] Yeah. Take your time. Go ahead.

[Participant G:] But also, that humor and lightness is such a part of it, and joy, and unbelievable constancy of the interconnection.

So I was focusing, and I wish I could tell you the content, but I don't want to go there. But it was so poetic. It's beautiful.

The other group — I mentioned I can tell my content. That I couldn't go on stage. Oh no — that suddenly, at first I was in the spotlight, but then actually I said, but now I'm in the wings, because the other woman is on the stage.

And it was so whole body, what we all were doing, that one of my partners jumped up and got on stage with them. But for me, I stayed. I wasn't really disturbed at all by it. I was just speaking about it, and the feeling of being more in the wings was such an important part of my focusing session. Because just the anticipation of my next turn to go on.

So that, and then the physical gesturing just got insane in our group. This movement that was just touching everybody. Insanely wonderful.

See if there was anything else. Oh, yeah. Interbeing with my partners. The words that kept coming were the time traveling that we were doing, and the pieces between us. The children in us, the different ages of young people in us, who were kind of hanging out together.

And my young toddler got a gigantic piece of support from one of my partner's young wisdom child. And it's like my young toddler, who was freaking out, was like, oh wow, I'm a wisdom child too.

[Russell:] Yeah. Wow. Oh — I'm a wisdom child too.

[Participant G:] Yeah. And that's really there. It's really there, and there are people in it. It's big.

[Russell:] It's not even a restructure. It's an acknowledgement. We're working with turning the light around.

Let's just pause here a second and let that.

This picture of that child in us learning. When we step out of time, the past can be healed. It's ironic. It's paradoxical. In time, it's what it was. Out of time, it can be anything.

[Silence 38 seconds]

[Russell:] Something else want to come?

Yeah.

A second time

[Participant H:] So, I'll try. It works as well.

I already believed it will be too much. It will be too much. I was the first, so I can't — having people sharing, and then doing that. I think it's okay. It feels okay. But I cannot imagine anyone. So three — so that's good.

And as a first person, this time I could also try what it was to get back to what was said. What was said, better. It's very different between the first time and the second time.

The first time, the focusing thing. And the second time, for me, it was not the same thing, because there were these words that resonated, and so it's somewhere else. It's a mix of thinking and feeling the body. But it's quite an interesting experience. And for me, the challenge to accept that it is different the second time and the first time. It's not the same experience. I'm not doing the same thing. It's another thing.

And once I accepted it, it was quite easy.

[Russell:] So let me ask you a question about that, so I understand.

The second time coming around — am I right in thinking that the intention is to go in, in a similar way that you went in at first, but you found that you couldn't go in in the same way? Or did you have a different intention?

[Participant H:] No, I had the same intention. But the fact is, as a first speaker, the words are new.

[Russell:] Right. So it goes where it goes.

[Participant H:] But as a fourth speaker, going back to the first topic.

[Russell:] Right.

[Participant H:] The words are not new.

[Russell:] Right.

[Participant H:] And there's this shared world.

[Russell:] Yes.

[Participant H:] A world with people.

[Russell:] Right.

[Participant H:] And so, to me, it was a larger world.

[Russell:] Yes.

[Participant H:] There is another world to enter.

[Russell:] Yes.

[Participant H:] And so it was not just being with my body. It was also being with what emerged from the people.

[Russell:] Yes. Yes. Okay. Got it.

[Participant H:] And so the content was related to practicing, because it was about the situation that focusing is not a regular practice for me. So it was, when the topic was of interest for everybody in the group.

And it was very interesting, because the way the other people spoke about the topic, what I heard from them — there were other words, and these words helped me to rephrase the situation. And rephrasing the situation, the situation is quite different.

So it was really — not that I think I saw it as the other saw it, but these words they said were at my disposal, for me. It was really helpful, and it turned out to be an insight.

And so we had this nice discussion after the fact. And when I focus, many times I have images. Images of a medieval castle, and the space around the castle. And we asked ourselves as a group, what were these images? What are these images? Are they symbols?

And to me, they are not symbols. They are rather metaphors, constructed in a life. And I think seeing that, accepting these images as metaphors, is very helpful for me.

[Russell:] Yes, yes. Beautiful. Thank you. Thank you.

Wisdom body

[Russell:] I just want to comment on this, because it will lead to something we're going to do tomorrow. I just want to plant the seed here.

For me, Gene's rather brilliant insight, and key insight, that before we are individuals, we are interaction with the world. I form in interaction. It's unthinkable not to have the air, not to have the ground, not to have other people. Even if you're a loner. That we form out of that.

And I'm going to take another step and say, our body is always in interaction with the world, and our conscious mind picks up a very small percentage of that.

So if we wonder, how can I have all this insight when I go inside, when I take the time? How come it works so well to listen like that? Well, it's not mysterious. Your body, just in this interaction we had here today — I don't know how we'd quantify it, but there are millions of learnings that we each had, that become available to your bodily knowing, that's not in your conscious mind.

But if we go to the channels that this speaks on, and develop the kinds of invitations that encourage its safety in coming forth, then it's no big surprise that what I call wisdom body functions. That that knowing is not mysterious. It's connected. That everything you've connected with in your life — I don't know if it's beyond this life, that's beyond my understanding right now — but at least in this life, is living in you, and available.

But it takes a different state of consciousness than the one we normally look in, or try to solve problems in, or try to understand, or identify self in, usually, until we have a revolution in our self-identity. And we stop being just that historic self that thinks this and this and this, and has that self-image, and that picture of its abilities, and all that.

And so living under that is all this potentiality. How do we access it? Well, it's accessed at a different level of consciousness, and every practice we do is helping us get more available, more permeable, to the wisdom body.

And we could say that wisdom body is not bound to your physical body. It's in you and around you. And you have this access in certain states.

And so we'll go further with that tomorrow. But let's just have that in the air, from what was just said. Where do metaphor, where do image, where do dream images come from? How is all that meaningfulness created in our lives? It's not just made up. It comes out. And when it really connects, you can have a dream that you're on a motorcycle going across, and then connect later with the person you were with. And it's not bound to time. You can have precognitive events. Because you're entering a different level of reality, in which these things have different rules.

And it's not mysterious. I mean, it's a mystery, but it's not mysterious. It's not mysterious that it happened, that we have that capacity. It's awe-inspiring, and it's a mystery, and each time it occurs I can go, oh my God, wow. But it's not mysterious that we have that access.

It's maybe a little mysterious that we forget. A little mysterious that we lose confidence.

The larger body

[Participant I:] So, part of the conversation that stuck with me, what was just being talked about, also included the exercise that we did, the very first triad we were in. Connecting with our bodies and sensing — physically sensing — and trying not to go into thought, but just experiencing what we're in.

And in my process, oftentimes, the question I have is that it's so easy to just be in this metaphor, in this metaphor. I can follow this metaphor. It doesn't always appear to be in my body, but then I pull myself back and try to connect it to something in my body.

And so my question was, should I, can I just go with it? I would be off with this metaphor, and I could stay with it for a long time, but a part of the process that I'm trying to develop is to go back.

[Russell:] Right. Okay. So let me speak to that. And it's a challenging discernment that I'm going to give you.

Your experiential body is not bound to your physical body. So it's very good to develop a good ground in your physical body, so that you can enter the larger body.

So I'm validating that you can follow outside the physical body. But the caution there is, it's very easy when one goes like that to get very mental, and not be led by the experiential body, but sometimes by hopes, dreams.

So there's a way — it's less tangible than, I can feel my physical body — but there's a way of being still whole. Not just following an image, but the image is connected to the whole being. And you want to learn to differentiate that from just being in a nice fantasy.

You get what I mean? So there's some thin slicing there. It's subtle differences.

Okay. Good.

Across difference

[Participant B:] So the experience with our three, very briefly, in terms of the process. If I share the issue, you'll know who the players are, so I hope it's okay with the players.

[Russell:] Yeah. Okay.

[Participant B:] So we had two old guys and a young guy.

[Russell:] Wait a second. This wasn't the two old guys and a young guy walked into a bar?

[Participant B:] It just reminded me of the power of — one of the powers of the group is that we had generational perspective. And we were talking about fatherhood. That was part of the issue, without going into it too much. And of course we had three fathers, and there was an intergenerational perspective, and I think that really complemented what we were doing.

I wish our groups had more mix, which is not about how you set this up. Even to the extent that we don't have any minorities, and even to the extent that we have a little international representation, but not a lot.

And I've been blessed with the opportunity to travel, like yourself, and you just find out that if you focus with people from around the world, or visit, or whatever it is, there is that total interconnectivity on that level, but also on an intergenerational level.

And it was very powerful, because our perspectives were balanced by the young man's perspectives, and back and forth. And it was very helpful for me, as I came around the second time, that I could draw from both perspectives as I was going back in. I found it very helpful.

[Russell:] Yeah. So something about having the diversity of listeners really added to yours.

And I'll just say a word to that. It's almost — if you were with someone from Rwanda, or if you were with someone of a different sexual orientation, or different gender, different walk, or different age, there's some mystery in the fact that we can draw wisdom, no matter how far away we are from each other in the world, or no matter how different our paths are in life. We can still draw from each other, learn, and feel the togetherness.

[Participant B:] Yes. That gives me some hope. Broaden our view.

[Russell:] And broaden our view, yeah.

Because without that experience, it's an abstract truth. But knowing it, experiencing it — a felt sense of the other that has an experience you don't have.

[Participant B:] That also really connects in with what you wrote about after Rwanda. The tendency to, this is us doing this to us. It's not other. And whenever we make those other distinctions, whether it's about inner states, or other people, or other, we have to soften those.

[Russell:] Yeah.

A stepped process

[Russell:] And what we need to go through in our inner world and our interpersonal world — what you remind me of, when you say that, and I'm not sure how it's relevant yet, but I think it will

be — is what was just pointed out. Anybody connecting with anybody, and finding commonality, and finding meaningfulness in the connecting.

A most basic requirement, as I said our first night, I think, is that safety. That we have to feel safe enough. Because if that's not there, there will be self-protection, and should be, we could say, because that's the biological imperative that will supersede the newer states.

So there's safety, which leads to trust. Safety is not always the same as trust. Trust is a kind of higher evolution, I think, of — safety is a requirement for trust, but feeling safe doesn't necessarily create the kind of trust we're talking about.

And then, a very valuable distinction for me. Sometimes if there's been significant abuse, and been significant degradation, forgiveness can't happen yet. And I used to kind of try to go for forgiveness, encourage forgiveness. And I learned that the process of getting to true forgiveness is a process.

And that there are steps that can include a kind of interaffecting and interconnecting, and you're not yet at the state of forgiveness, or at complete healing. You're at something like tolerance. To be able to tolerate the presence of the other is not a small thing, when, for some of the Tutsis in our group, to sit next to a Hutu who had killed more than twenty people.

And those of you who read my articles know this. A woman whose arm he cut off was there, and they were together. She was really unique in that she did get to forgiveness, but she'd really been working quite a bit on this. Most of the Tutsis didn't. And so the Tutsis in the room — actually, just to tolerate his presence was an important step.

And there was another step that happened, because of the way we were communicating in our small circles, and speaking from the heart with each other. They got to see him as a human being again, in his own struggle. Weren't ready to forgive, but he was no longer this demon. He was no longer this inhuman being. But they were also holding him responsible. They did not accept his apology completely.

Great anger when he would say, I don't know what happened, a devil overtook me. No. You did this. Great anger at any kind of deflection out of self-responsibility.

But needing to be in a space that could have all of that brought what we can call reconciliation. That they could hug at the end, and it was true, whereas at first it was difficult to meet eyes. That's big steps. But still not forgiveness, for most of the Tutsis in the room. Not yet.

But being able to be with each other in that kind of interaffecting, and feel each other, and let each other in — big step.

So I just wanted to layer it a little bit. Because I used to be, and I still am, but I used to be more naive in terms of what needs to happen in these kinds of — I used to think, oh, we can go from, if there's enough love and care and consciousness in the room, we can go from unsafety to healing. I knew it would be a process, but I thought, if we give this five days, we can do that. And no. It might be five years. It might be five lifetimes. I don't know.

But I know that you don't have to be at the end of the process for there to be a huge shift that is really interaffecting, opening to each other. Being able to decide to work in the fields together.

Being able to have a project together that you're going to do. And those are very important steps on the way to a deeper level of healing.

And there's something about that — I don't say that just to bring up an example of Rwanda. There's something about that in our lives that is more subtle, but I want to include it for any of the inner states that we are still pushing away. Any of the places we're not forgiving in there yet. Any of the beings out there we're still keeping out of our sphere of caring. Because eventually they're going to be in the sphere of care.

That's essential for your happiness and for your wholeness, because everyone that you've met who is excluded is keeping you from being whole.

And so, but yet that doesn't mean to try to force an inclusion. It's a stepped process. But if we think, oh, I've got to go to forgiveness, something inside is likely to say no. And if that's all the options are — either I'm where I am, or I forgive — that's not a choice.

We need at least four other steps one could take in there. Ways to go. Okay, how can I not be quite as hard inside? Yeah, I'm not going all the way there, but how can there be some — can I see them? And then, I might help somebody. Can you imagine them as an infant? Would it be okay to care for them if, when you picture — can you imagine them on their deathbed?

These are helpful, I find, for people to soften a little bit inside towards the other. So that it's not this big thing that you're trying to take on all at once.

So somehow that has relevance, and we all make our relevance out of that.

Yeah. That's right. Good.

You had something.

[Participant J:] For the work that we do in talking circles, and some of what you're talking about — the person who violated the other person, their thoughts there. And if they can talk, if they can make contact, if they can share a story, feeling happens faster, because you're working with reorganizing the nervous system.

Like the trauma worker, forgiveness is part of reorganizing the trauma, the nervous system. But if both people, on both sides, are working, or talking, their nervous systems are self-regulating each other. And so a little shift, a little shift, a little shift.

[Russell:] Yeah. And that's — you see that happening in our bodies. It's amazing.

[Participant J:] Yes. Faster.

[Russell:] Yeah. Great.

Who is left out

[Participant K:] It's a little off topic, but as you were speaking, I was thinking of how, even though I may not feel I'm prejudiced, I think my body probably excludes people who are ethnically and racially perhaps different, or economically and socially different from me.

And so to be able to do this kind of work with people who are really different from my condition, and from my historic self, would seem to be fundamental.

[Russell:] Really. I'm hoping our future — one of the things, I'm working a lot with pictures of the direction of the embodied life school, and that includes something in that direction. Of more inclusiveness. Wider.

And one of the things I want to do within the next year is something that Bernie Glassman has been doing for twenty years. And I'm going to invite a friend of mine who's a Zen peacemaker, who runs these what are called street retreats.

Rather than doing a retreat at a center, you live homelessly for three days, usually Thursday through Sunday. And you gather a couple of times a day to do some meditation and some sharing of your experience, but you're living off the street. If you can get a bed at a Salvation Army, you can take that, or you get cardboard and you're lying on cardboard, and you're finding what it's like to interact.

You have no money. You have to beg for everything.

And in fact, what he asks people to do — and he says this is the hardest thing for most, because most people who go to these are successful people who are very good at taking care of others and giving to others — but to go on the retreat, what he asks you to do is create a mala, a thing made of beads. And I think it's eighteen beads. But each bead, you have to get donations — not a hundred dollars from one person, but enough that would cover. I think it's a hundred and eight dollars per bead. So it's almost like more than a thousand dollars that you have to collect from friends, business people, family, to let them know what you're doing. That you can't hide, and you have to humble yourself. You're normally the one who's always giving. Can you ask somebody?

And he said that puts people through the biggest changes. And as I think of doing it, I realized that's more challenging to me than sleeping on the street.

So he's invented these very interesting situations for people to experience themselves in. And I met a lot of people who've done a lot of street retreats. New York City is the main one. They don't — I can give you a source you can read about it. It's fascinating work.

They live with homeless people. They live under bridges. They find out, hey, there's going to be a great meal at St. Mark's Cathedral. They're serving it at eight o'clock. Let's get over there. So they go over there. They'll eat. They'll sometimes have beds.

And they learn to live without money. They say it's the freest many of them have ever felt. I have no place to go today. I can just see people. They do a lot of walking and sitting. And you want a cup of coffee? You've got to stand outside a Starbucks and ask.

And if you're a man, you don't shave for at least a week beforehand. You get really old clothes. You have to look the part.

I'll get there. You're next.

There's no pretension that you're homeless, because you're not. You're doing an experiment in living on the street for a few days. It's not some sort of delusion that this is what it would feel like to be homeless, because you have a home to go to, and you have a shower waiting, and it's not phony. But what's it like to live on the street, if you don't have any money and you have to ask for everything? And what comes up?

And then you get together a couple of times a day to talk about the fear. Many people speak about, I've never felt so invisible. No one looks at me, or people are so scared of me. I've never had this experience. I feel like a pariah.

So this would be one small example of experiences that, for some of us, will be helpful, I think, to widen our connecting to all of life. Who do we leave out of our sphere of care? Who do we not see anymore?

Wait a second. You were next.

The tiny place

[Participant L:] Just so you know, this is my will.

[Russell:] This is yours. Yeah.

[Participant L:] A lot of stuff is coming up about history.

But what I wanted to say, on top of what you're talking about, is that I sit on a board for a family kitchen, and I've been interviewing homeless people and writing their story and publishing it. Right before I came, I sat with a family of six, a young couple with four children, who are able to sleep in the back of their truck, without a cab on it, because it's summer. But they're so misunderstood.

That isn't really what I wanted to talk about, but it helps me to share a part of me.

So I think we're talking about our groups.

[Russell:] Yeah, we can do that. A little bit, and we were going.

[Participant L:] And what's interesting about that is that I notice that trust issue, that I focus routinely, but it's with one person. And I don't know. Maybe too much is coming through. Sorry.

[Russell:] Just take your time. Also, feel your ground there. We don't need to know why. If it's okay, take a moment to feel your bottom. Feel your —

[Participant L:] So I'm —

[Russell:] Yeah. Take your time here. There's no pressure.

[Participant L:] So old. It's so old. It's a really old place.

Yeah. It is a big angry place in there. A really big angry place.

So when I'm with new people, it's harder as I get older to be authentic. And there are moments, for sure. I touch it a bit.

[Russell:] You touch the authentic feeling a bit. Is that it?

[Participant L:] Yeah. And there's even a spirit, a playful one.

[Russell:] Yeah. And if it feels okay, just pause for a moment, and all that's there. You know that there's a playful spirit, and there's this touching into what's authentic, and there's this sometimes hard being authentic, and in there is also anger about that, maybe, or about other things. And all this is there, and you're sitting on the cushion right now. Your feet are on the floor. Your arms are on your legs.

And you can sense, living in this big being, is all this.

[Participant L:] It's just so big. It feels so big, so big.

[Russell:] And so let that inner place know you know it's so big.

[Participant L:] Yeah. It's just like I'm weeks behind, and it's ending.

[Russell:] Yeah. The sense of being weeks behind, and feeling the end coming, and that's part of the so-big in there.

[Participant L:] Yeah. And it's like I want people to know me, and I don't. Part of me doesn't care either. Like, why.

[Russell:] Again, just keep letting these places know.

Anybody wants to go to the bathroom, go ahead. She's fine with you going to the bathroom. You see, that's good. Okay, now you can be relieved, and you can come back. She can be relieved, and you can be relieved. And now you're sitting there.

Yeah, let's take some time. Nothing needs to happen, and we're recognizing there's a whole big thing in there. A whole big thing.

Yeah, so this is important. There's maybe something like regret right now.

Yes. So that thing that you don't know about is really huge, but the standing up seems really huge. And right now, here, what you're really in touch with, if I got you right, is something about the wanting — part of you wanting to be authentic yesterday, and not knowing how. And then finding it, and not even really wanting to, because that comes too, but just running away.

[Participant L:] Yeah.

[Russell:] Let's just take a moment. Let's take a moment to be with the place that feels, I don't know how. Just be with the I-don't-know-how place, and see what it wants. How it wants to be. How it wants you to know it. A place that feels incapable of knowing.

[Participant L:] It's pretty small. It's pretty small. It's really tiny.

[Russell:] You feel it in your body somehow?

[Participant L:] It's really tiny. Nobody sees it.

[Russell:] Let it know you see it. Can you see it right now? That really tiny, tiny, tiny place.

[Participant L:] Like way down in a cave. Trying to be heard.

[Russell:] Tiny, tiny, way down in a cave, and wanting to be heard.

First, just let it know you know it's there. Let it know you're with it. You can sense it way, way down there.

[Participant L:] Like a shell.

[Russell:] Yeah. So you're sensing that little person yelling up, and again, you keep letting it know you're with it, that you hear it, and there's room for it.

[Participant L:] Well, it just kind of sits down. Relaxes. It's really lonely. Pretty lonely down there.

[Russell:] Get a sense if it would like you to come closer.

[Participant L:] Me?

[Russell:] Yeah. That one. The one who's seeing it. The one who's with it.

You'll really get a feeling if it wants you right next to it, if it wants you holding it, if it wants you a few feet away. It will let you know how it wants you. This really tiny voice that's trying to be heard.

[Participant L:] It just wants me to — tell me. Just have me listen. Maybe just sort of hold it.

[Russell:] So really, really let it show you what it wants, and what it wants you to hear. Let it speak to you right now.

You are this larger space, and you have this part in you that's really small, and feels like it doesn't know how, and it wants to be heard. And what's it want you to hear?

Can you feel where it is in your body? Is it in your body in some way?

[Participant L:] No, it's not.

[Russell:] Okay. So let it know you're with it, and you're not going to make it do anything. But you're really here to listen, and be with it as long as it needs you to be with it.

[Participant L:] Yeah.

[Russell:] So there's something in there that wants to help it. Yeah, so that's another place in you. There's the little being down there, and then there's the place that wants to help it. And then there's you, that's aware of all of this.

And you can sense that. You can sense the little voice, the place, and the place that wants to fix it. And it sounded like that fixing place was also pretty tired.

Yeah, so let both of them know you see them. The fixer, and the little one. And so you're sensing into both these places.

Let her know you sense just how much she wants to grow up, and that you can sense how she wants to grow up really fast.

[Participant L:] I think she just needs to be.

[Russell:] Yeah. So just — is it okay to stay a little bit longer, and just be with her? That feel okay?

So there's an embarrassed place.

Keep letting all of that know that you're here. Your bottom's on the cushion, your feet are on the floor, and there's an embarrassed place.

Yeah. Let all of that have space, and know that I, the Russell out here, am completely responsible for the group space. Please feel completely free. I will take care of all of us. And your job right now is to be with the little one down there, and the one who wants to fix it.

Be with it.

I'm even going to invite you to take a step back, and see the place that wants to fix it. Maybe you could be even larger than that, and see, oh, inside of me there's this hurt place, this small,

vulnerable place, and there's this other place that wants to make it better, and sometimes struggles to make it better, works hard to make it better, doesn't know how to make it better. And you are seeing all of this.

You're with them, and you're taking care of both of them. You're bringing your presence to both, and listening.

Is it right that both — the fixer, the one who wants to make it all better, and the little one — they're both pretty tired?

Let them know you sense that. How it is in there. That real tiredness.

Just sit here on the cushion. You don't have to make anything better. You are the space in which all this is happening. You are the container, and you are the seeing of it all.

[Participant L:] Yeah. I don't understand it, and it feels okay right now.

[Russell:] Good, good. Let's give it some more time, though, because it's right here. There's nothing for you to do now. This is time for you just to be here. You're not here to fix.

We're separating you from the fixer. They're very wedded often. And right now, I'd love you to take a rest on the cushion, and see there's this very tired fixer energy in you. And there's this little shy, vulnerable being it's trying to fix.

And if it's okay, you can let yourself just rest on the cushion, giving space to both of these. You're not going to figure it out. You're not going to figure them out. You're just going to let them be as they are.

[Participant L:] I obviously want to figure it out. Or I wouldn't be here.

[Russell:] Right. Well, would it feel just as true to say, something in me really wants to figure it out? If that's just as true, use that. Because I think there's a real big something in me that wants to figure it out, make it better, fix it, get on with it.

And for right now, those voices just need your space.

[Participant L:] Yeah.

[Russell:] This is good. Give the space to the tears. You can still kind of sense, in the background, you're sitting there.

[Participant L:] Someday he'll get lucky.

[Russell:] So you feel you're sitting here, and let these tears be here. There is such tiredness. That needs the time, and the space, and permission. Really come out. Let it know you know just how tired it is, right now.

You keep letting all that know that you're with it. That really tired place that can't even sleep, and the vulnerable little place, and you're with all of that. And it all has room right now. No demands.

You're just with yourself right now, giving space to what appears. You're letting me be responsible for the group. And just take some more time.

There's a nourishing energy living around you right now. If you can take it, if you can let it in, you're surrounded by just what you're longing for. It's in you and around you.

So, good to feel your bottom on the cushion. Good to feel your feet on the floor. Good to let those inner places know they have the time they need to suckle on the energy.

[Participant L:] Oh, no. None of us want to be needy.

[Russell:] Right. You're not the needy type. Everybody knows you're not needy.

Yeah. Just giving space.

Say that again?

[Participant L:] Yeah.

[Russell:] I'm good to just sit here. Feel I'm here. And really allowing space for all this hurt that needs the permission to be here.

And go — I want you to go slow now. I think you're just about good. Okay, so there's a little popping out, so just let it. Another few seconds of coalescing in your chest, in your belly.

[Participant L:] I'm as strong as I am, but I'm not as strong as I look.

[Russell:] Right? And boy, how capable, how much you create, and it's really tired in there. And how to be with these places.

You are not the fixer of you. You are the space in which the fixer arises. The fixer can be helpful or not, but it's not the I.

So just right now, let — yeah, now it's coalescing in there. Don't try to think about what he's saying. He's saying too much. Just feel it. Down into your bottom.

[Participant L:] Thank you.

[Russell:] I want to give you one last little tidbit, to have back there when there's a feeling of enough safety, and you don't know how to be authentic. Like in that triad. You can say, I'm not sure how to be in this situation. Just say it.

Can you imagine that? I'm not sure how to be in this situation and feel right. Or, I'm not sure how to be here. Can you imagine that? Try it right now. Just let me hear those words, even if something regrets it.

[Participant L:] Right.

[Russell:] Right. Yeah. Sometimes, right. It's okay not to know. It's okay not to know how to be what you're wanting to be in a certain moment. And just that brings you exactly what you're looking for.

[Participant L:] I also found the writing to be very cumbersome. It's like, my God, I have to read every —

[Russell:] Yeah. I would suggest not writing every word. Wait a second. I would suggest not to write every fucking word. All the other ones are okay.

The most important thing in the writing practice is the transitions. The transitions. When something shifts, or enough noting that you can follow it.

[Participant L:] I just want to say, I wish that I could look in everybody's eye, but I am right now, so I thank you so much for holding me in this space. It was my turn.

[Russell:] It's your turn now. Yeah. Good. You're good.

Pause

[Russell:] Okay, I need a pause. Probably some other people might need a pause.

So, let's see, what are we? Oh, we're going to do a movement lesson. Let's start at ten of. Let's be on the floor at ten of, so be back a little before that.