Discussion

Angela 2 — Week 6, Day 5, Session 4 — 44 minutes

Summary: Russell and the group look back at a modeling, marking when strong feeling found a larger space and when a fixer identity could be accompanied. They consider tears, holding the group, and how being wrong can point toward what is true. He describes integration as body, feeling, symbolizing, and a specific place, then ways of listening without being overwhelmed.

After the modeling

[Russell:] So, let's just take a moment and reflect back. It might be there's nothing to say. Sometimes when we have a spontaneous modeling, something comes — as people who are learning this way of being with yourself and being with others, you might get interested in a particular moment, or taken by it. Doesn't have to be a question, and it can be. And if there's not energy for it, we'll just move forward. I just didn't want to jump without checking in to see if there was a learning we could do together.

I've got one or two comments that are right there, so I'll bring those, and then if you have something else, bring it.

So one was — I don't know if you could sense, and I don't expect you to remember, cause you were in your process — the moment about five to seven minutes in, where there was a lot of feeling, a lot of emotional content, a lot of strong feeling. There were a few times where I was inviting kind of being with that, but it wasn't ready to be with that. They needed more space for the feeling to be there. So it kind of needed to give that space. And then a second, like a gentle invite — say hello to that place. And then a second time, kind of needing to be in it.

But then there was a moment, maybe it was more like eight or nine minutes in — sorry, go back — where there was a pause. And there was a shift in tone. And the shift in tone was a moment where the feeling was still there, and there was a larger space with the feeling.

This is a key moment. This is a key moment.

Now, I want to say that sometimes it's just important that feelings are just there. You know, and we're not gonna be with them, and they just need to kind of run their course for a while. But in my experience, that can be energetically helpful and rarely transformative.

Feelings by themselves rarely transform. They shift energy inside. That was the old cathartic theme that I was raised in in the seventies, you know, gonna beat on pillows and cry a lot, and something shifts energetically. But often there isn't a deep shift. You're back in a similar place some time later. It's somewhat like orgasm, where you then are hungry again after a while, but it kind of energetically changes you for a little while.

So I say that, but at the same time, sometimes in people's process, especially if they haven't been allowing — and it sounded like there hadn't been tears for a while — that really needed to be affirmed, allowed, permitted, like I was emphasizing with Pete yesterday. You know, if he had cried the whole time, I would have been just happy with that. That would have been fine, you know? So sometimes that's just fine, depending on someone's tendencies in their processing.

But here, so I was kind of inviting what was living in me. I didn't know where it needed to go, or I wasn't trying to control it, but I had this sense of, there's a lot of feeling here, and it may be wonderful if Barbara can also sense the larger space with the feeling, could be with the feeling.

And so there were two key moments when that shifted. There was the first one, where there was a kind of pausing, and there was the sense of that little place began there. And then there was a sense of being with something, and there was still a lot of feeling there, but there was a being with. There was a lot of feeling, and I was reminding her of her bottom and her feet.

And then the feelings came very strong again, and then there was another shift, and kind of a startle time. An existential moment, a surprise time, when it was almost like gung, gung, gung, gung, I'm not the fixer. I'm not the one to fix. It was like going, going, going, going, because there was a strong identity with the fixer, a voice, a fixer place.

So that was another key moment. Is this okay that I'm talking in this way?

Another key moment in the processing — that one key moment, that there could be a place in here that she could keep company with, and then a key moment when the fixer appeared as an identity, and there could be a being with the fixer and this. And there were a couple of times when the fixer tried to glom back on to the identity, and we managed to — oh, there's that place again, or there's that something that wants to fix. Can you see that? Can you be with that place too?

So my invitations to hold presence for those places, I think, were helpful to kind of be in the navigation.

So those were kind of key moments, and I don't know if those were so obvious, so I wanted to underline those. And if anybody is sitting there going, yeah, I didn't see all that, I didn't know that was going on — you're not supposed to. No, I'm just pointing to things to look for, you know, in your future as you look.

It goes back to simple things. Are people identified with a part? Sometimes they need to be, so we don't say you can't be. If there's a lot of energy there, okay. Right. That's right.

Well, that was the second time, because the first time she had had this kind of startle moment of not being the fixer, and the fixer was there. And then it was the second time that the fixer came back in, so it had already established that ground.

Let's go slow, because I also want to be very sensitive that this is a living process.

[Participant:] Yeah, something would have shut down. I guess that's why this process is so respectful. He feels we don't always have to be on target.

[Russell:] Right, right, right. Like Gene helps me with that a lot. He'll say — one of his favorite lines is, you know, I say ten things, nine of them are wrong. But every time I'm wrong, we get closer to what's right.

I love when I'm wrong. Because I love when I say something, and if my client feels, no, no, no, it's not that, then I know they're in touch with what it is. To say it's not that means they know what it is. And what an affirmation.

So it's not about you being right. It's about, are they in a place to be able to guide their own process, and you're helping them. So your every wrong place is closer to the right place, because we're eliminating all the nots. Every not is a step toward what it is.

You know, that's why if somebody's really — well, there's something in there, and it's kind of, you know, I have no idea, no idea what it is. So then I might say, like, especially — well, it's kind of light and breezy, but I have no idea what it is. I go, well, is it a heavy anger? Oh, no, no, no, it's clearly not that. Okay. So we take something that it's obviously not. Well, is it something dark? No, no, no, no, no. It's got more light in it. It's even got some color. So identifying what it's not often opens the space to what it is.

And that's very wonderful to use with yourself when you feel really confused about something that's going on.

In the Feldenkrais version of that, it's what I call intentional errors. It's where you do something that is not what you're looking for, so you can back toward what you're looking for.

And I'll get there in one sec. So let's pause just a sec and let all that drop in.

Your own process

[Russell:] I want to underline something, cause I'm very concerned. I'm realizing, as I continue, what's living here. I just — I'm very concerned that the way I'm describing things is creating a sense that he knows stuff that I don't, and it creates a feeling of insecurity, or not ready, or something. So I want to underline that what's effective is people being in touch with their own process.

I am gradually becoming more skillful with that. I hope to be more skillful next year, and I make mistakes. But the basic process we're working with is reliable. It's trustworthy.

You keep bringing people back to their own wisdom, and then you try to guide it some, and if the guiding isn't helpful, it'll get clear. But you're not in charge. You're suggesting and offering. And boy, it's so good to know that if you have the atmosphere that we're working with — that kind of respectful, listening, in-touch atmosphere — it's almost always at least a little helpful. And it's often very helpful.

Is it still there?

[Participant:] No. Yeah, I think it relates to — I want to come back to the, about feelings by themselves don't have form.

[Russell:] Yes.

[Participant:] If it's released to tears and crying. I'm one of those people. As I go in and I feel a tenderness or compassion, I go to tears. So I don't feel bad about it. My question is, because it happens frequently, I don't know whether or not it's connected or related to not focusing deeper. In other words, is it symbolic of a deeper issue that I'm not getting to, or is it just I'm in touch with the compassionate place, and I'm not skilled enough to know whether that.

[Russell:] Yeah. Yeah, I do. And is it okay if I bring more choices in?

[Participant:] Absolutely.

[Russell:] Okay. Cause neither of those feels just right for me.

I want to really encourage you to trust them, to welcome the tears, their gifts, and be aware if the tears have a stop sign on them. In other words, if they stop your furthering process. And they don't. Usually they don't need to. If you're conscious, you can go deep with the tears.

So the only drawback to the easiness of the tears is if the tears become an indicator that kind of you've reached the end. And it's not the end. It's often, for you, the beginning of — now you're in a tender enough place to allow the next in.

And so let them be a kind of green light and not a red light. That they're opening you to, okay, now I'm soft enough and available enough for what's living in there. If there's something else that wants to be acknowledged, I'm available. Okay?

[Participant:] That makes sense.

[Russell:] Yeah.

Holding the group

[Participant:] I just wanted to say that there was something you said similarly, both with Pete and during Barbara's process, about I got this, you know, I got the group. There was something in the way that felt so good in the field, you know? Just like, felt all of us kind of sink in. I don't know, it was different with both, but just something of like — I don't know, the way you're creating a container and holding space, I just don't really —

[Russell:] Oh, good. Yeah. Well, it was particularly needed on multi-levels here.

On the first level was, knowing Barbara, she would be very concerned about — and she actually mentioned at one point, you know, taking everybody's time, or people needing to pee.

[Participant:] Yeah, right.

[Russell:] I'm going, you know, yeah. And so she was already showing that her concern for the group was going to take her away from her being with herself, which I am guessing is one of the things that happens in life. And one of the ways her process doesn't get the kind of attention that it needs, cause everything out here gets it first, or like that. And so she was modeling what gets in the way anyway. So I wanted to make sure — you know, so that was one level of it.

The second level of it is, if I'm engaged in a process, I am tuned into the group mind. I am committed to taking care of the group and the individual. And so I'm not kidding. I'm not just saying it as a throw-off line, or you know, don't worry, I've got it. So I am tuning to that. That's part of my job, part of my responsibility.

And we are in a space together that can allow taking what looks like too much time, or something like that. That we have grown a container that can hold that. And people that needed to go to the bathroom could, and we can deal with it. You know, so.

[Participant:] Which is a nice — maybe, maybe this is a maybe — a nice modeling for you, from you. One way in everyday life is to let the people know that you're concerned about, that they can take care of themselves, or they can take care in another way, that they don't — because you are going to take care of this inner place that needs your time right now. That you don't have to feel that I've got to take care of them, or take care of this place, or resent them because you're taking care of them and not giving care to this place, and blame them for that, but free you both.

[Russell:] Yeah.

For me, at that moment, was a distraction from the process. So I wanted to swat it away. And I felt in enough connection that we could — I felt like the needy place, we could have gone there, but it would have been a distraction for where the energy was, that she was starting to drop into at that time. So I said, don't worry, you're not needy. It was kind of like, don't worry, everybody can go to the bathroom. I'll take care of the group. Well, you know, you're not needy. Let's stay with this.

So, you know, no rules. Sometimes, I mean, you know, somebody may have a rule that says you welcome whatever is there, no matter what. And I say, in general, you want to welcome what comes, and sometimes what comes is kind of taking you off your path, and it's helpful to try to differentiate and make mistakes.

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] And that question of what needs your attention.

[Participant:] Right.

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

Integration

[Russell:] Okay, so let me give you my picture of this, because this is a kind of a key picture, and you've heard it from me, actually, last segment, I believe, and I believe in the fourth segment, but let me give it as a whole picture.

So, I have a fairly precise understanding of the process of integration. That is a little bit unique, and I stand by it, at least for now.

So integration — integration, integer, in, oneness, integrate. Integration is connected to wholeness, wholeness connected to healing, that whole territory of how something completes itself or becomes whole. Yeah?

So what I see is, we have learned to function in parts. We divide ourselves up into thoughts, feelings, sensations, arms, shoulders. Feldenkrais is about integrating your body, often differentiating the parts only to integrate them, only so you can become whole again. And that you stop having an arm, but you have the ability to reach. Yeah, that picture.

So we're moving from a part to a function, to a being in the world in some way.

So we are implicitly whole. An experience is always whole, yet it's helpful sometimes to differentiate it so that we can reintegrate it. Yeah, that's the process of growth, cellularly. And we can look at that in many places in the world — how, for systems to get to their next level of complex

integration, they need to have a differentiation at a further level, which is often chaotic until it integrates again.

Yeah, but let me not get into a whole cybernetic thing right now. That's just a general picture.

Four components

[Russell:] So what are we integrating?

Well, if we differentiate it, each experience of living has a sensory component, your bodily component, physical bodily component. Each moment of living — different brain areas, a different way of describing — has a feeling component, what I call the feeling body.

So there's a physical component. You know, my knee is on the floor. There's a feeling component. There's a kind of passion about wanting to communicate this. There's a symbolizing. My hand is moving, representing the thoughts that are going around, and my words are part of that symbolizing.

And there's a fourth component always there, and that's a specific environment. That means this talk couldn't be happening like this without you, and without this room, and without this context. So it's always in a situation. It's always in an environment, that sensation, feeling, and symbolizing — often called thinking, but it's not only thinking.

Sensation, feeling, and symbolizing connects to a specific moment in the world.

And remind me to get back to why that last part — it's so key with the resource growing process, that it's not abstract, it's connected to a moment in time, it's connected to place. It's not just, oh yeah, I can imagine myself feeling well, or I can imagine — we want it specified, to make it whole.

Another way to say that: we cannot be whole in ourselves. The idea of know yourself is impossible outside of an environment. So we need a world to know ourselves, and a world means a moment in time in which we're interacting.

And so these four components are essential for an experience to be integrated.

When a part stands alone

[Russell:] So when somebody focuses on, I want to work on my anxiety, and they've taken the anxiety as an entity that they're going to work on, or my depression, or my — they've taken it out of the whole.

And now, if it's a therapeutic context, they might get into some feelings about it, or if it's a cognitive therapeutic process, get into the different ways of framing it, thinking about it. Maybe the feelings and the thoughts might both be invited there. It's rare — this is one of the gifts of many focusing processes — that you have the physical body valued, the feeling self valued, the symbolizing valued, and it's all living in a moment, in connection with the world, and in connection with another, or connection in the space around you.

Now, it's my opinion that even many focusers — and Gene would agree with this — lose the physical. They have the physical in relation to feeling, but not the physical just in relation to the physical. As a ground, they'll begin with that, but often lose that eventually. And that he, for his process, that was true, and that was one of the gifts, he would say, of my emphasis on that for him,

because it brought him back to his — he didn't like his physical body — and bring him back to it, and find how wonderful it was to just feel himself sitting in a chair.

And so when feelings are isolated, and one does like we did back in the seventies and eighties, of work on your feelings and bring them forward and work, they often were not in an integrated context.

The same — so we all know that when thinking gets disconnected, even brilliant thoughts, they live at a head level, they don't move through you. Right? Everyone knows what that's like.

Feelings are the same way. Feelings disconnected from symbolizing. We go, well, get out of your head. No, we need your head. Don't get out of your head. Have your head in the proper relationship to the feeling self and the bodily self.

And so it's quite precise what an integrated moment is going to include. And it's why, when I'm working with myself or with someone else, what's just in the air for me is — strong feelings there. Great. Can you also have your body with the strong feelings? What images are coming? Can we come back to the feelings?

And so it's like there's this stew, and we're making sure all the ingredients are there, and that we're not overloading it with garlic or zucchini or something, but we're keeping it in some — not necessarily balance, not necessarily equality, because sometimes there's more feeling, sometimes there's more ideas or symbolizing.

You know, if I'm working with somebody — I've got a guy who likes to come, or was coming down in San, when I worked in Marin. I just closed my office after 29 years, my Marin office. And he liked to come and work — he was very creative, he was a CFO of a big, actually non-profit — and to work with ideas from a felt sense. Was his creative process, was how new things would come. The feelings were there in support of his new visions for the group, for how he would work with his people under him. Most of the time it wasn't about his personal life, if you want to differentiate it that way, but the feelings were there to bring a whole picture.

That's why — can you imagine being in threes like us? Can you imagine if business people making decisions together about their companies had that going on? What kind of creative solutions, and how they would — somebody saying something, well, let me feel into that. Oh, there's something that gets alive in me about — and I'm not even talking that they would come to ecologic. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about creativity. I'm talking about informing each other. By what? By not just believing in your head and your ideas, but also not believing in your feelings.

Thinking — disconnected thinking will lead you astray. Disconnected feelings will lead you astray. Your body, disconnected — don't trust your body. And I tell people, don't trust your thoughts when they're disconnected. Don't trust your feelings when they're disconnected. Don't trust your body. Everyone says, trust your body. No.

Your body, unless you're in good connection with your feeling self and your symbols, will lead you down a blind alley. It'll lead you into its own history. It won't create something new. It needs the integrated moment for a new next to arise.

A rich mixture

[Russell:] So that's why we keep working with these same ingredients. And look, if you know you tend to be feeling dominated, well, you need to get slower, bring your body in a little bit more, and encourage some of your words, and your reflecting, and your finding words for what's in there. If you know you're thought dominated, encourage your feelings to get a little bit more airtime, and your body a little more airtime. If you tend to get lost in bodily sensations, let your symbolizing come in a little bit more — what's that — and your feeling about your bodily sensations.

Yes, so that we're creating a rich mixture. And do all of that in connection to the moment you're living in. So that it's not abstract, separated from the world around you, but it's living in that moment.

That's integration from my point of view. Okay.

Listening

[Participant:] I mean, I have a question about the listening. How long the lines are in tone, and then what you've just been talking about, also how the listener can use that, because as a listener I have concern about remembering the words. And also matching. Isn't it true we're supposed to match the tone? There were a few times with Barbara where your tone seemed lighter. And a few times where I was thinking I would have been more in paralysis with the intensity of her feelings, because it would have made me have feelings. Made me in my feeling a lot with her. So — it was a really scrambled question.

[Russell:] Well, let's take the first part. So, remembering what people are saying.

What to remember

[Russell:] The most important things to remember — there are two things. You don't have to remember everything. There are two things that I think are most important.

One is, if they're pretty much in their process, what they said most recently, and what they said strongest. What had the most in it. The rest you can leave out. Don't try to recall all that. What's most recent is easiest. It'll be in the airstream a little bit. And just staying in touch with where there was the strongest kind of feeling tone.

In terms of matching tone, it's an interesting subject, but actually I want to get to there second. I want to go first with this sense of overwhelmed paralysis and taking in feeling.

Ground and a bigger space

[Russell:] So what your inner life is letting you know, in my opinion: I need more groundedness when I'm listening to people with feelings. It's easy. I mean, it's a gift. It's a gift that you can feel for other people. That's a gift. Now, want to learn to use the gift well. So the gift needs a little extra ground.

And at times, if it's really triggering, it might even need a different spatial relationship. Now, that's hard in the middle of a session, but if the person's eyes are closed, literally just turning can be helpful, because this part of the body is very permeable. For those of us who are empathic, it is very permeable.

I think I've probably talked about this before, have I? It's really important.

If I'm in a — historically, this doesn't happen so much anymore. It's much rarer. But historically, when I was in a difficult moment with Linda, if there was a strong emotional moment, and I found her facing me would be too much. But I wanted to be able to be there for her. So I would either — like if, let's say, it was anger, I would say, you know, can you direct your anger over here? If not, I would turn. I would stay in the room, and she'd be okay with this, and I could stay with it. Receiving it on the side of my body was totally different than receiving it in my chest.

Sounds crazy. We think it's just — but it feels like a literal substance. This is my experience. You might not have that, but I've learned that sometimes — I've got lots of students who, mostly women, occasionally a man, where, some reason this happens in Germany a lot, where they're telling me about how vulnerable they feel, and they're wearing things that are very open here. And I say, you've got to cover this. You know, and I'll encourage wearing scarves, just to have something, some kind of barrier.

Yeah. You see if that's true for you.

So what I want to say in terms of taking things on: the ground is key. Having a sense of your backspace. If you can be present enough to shift your attention.

One of the best ways to pay attention to somebody is also pay attention — like, look behind me when you're looking at me. Include the space around me. You're hearing me, but there's a bigger space than Russell. When I'm listening to somebody, I need that bigger space. Especially if I'm getting pulled into their feeling state, the bigger space is really helpful. You know?

So those are keys.

Tone

[Russell:] In terms of tone, you know, I'm not very technique driven. There are people who speak about kind of matching tone, and sometimes I find that's helpful. Sometimes, if I'm not in harmony with somebody, or I'm feeling it's difficult to connect, then I find it helpful to be, as much as possible, in the same rhythm as them, intentionally.

If I already have good connection, I don't need to try to control the rhythm. The rhythm I trust. My voice I trust. Like that. Yes, please.

[Participant:] Thank you, thank you. And you were going to say something about resource growing and use performance.

[Russell:] Yeah, thank you.

A resource in a place

[Russell:] Yeah. It's great.

Yeah, so, okay, let me just — I think I already made it. I'll just say it again. I don't want to do a whole thing, cause I want to make sure we have enough time for our threes. I'm conscious of time.

When we are learning some new capacity, and we're using our imagination, to have that not simply be abstract — I mean, not just in your body. Like, let's say I'm learning about lightness and grace, that I don't just picture my body moving around in lightness and grace. That's good. But if I connect it to, okay, I'm in a specific place, I'm on this trail, and I can imagine this, and so I give

my brain a lot of sensory-rich cues for a place, and that can ground the memory more completely. Ground the resource more completely. Okay.

Into threes

[Russell:] Let me hear the question, then we'll see how long the answer's gonna be.

Yeah. It's implicit in it, and of course it gets paradoxical. But let's not go there. That'll be too long. Okay.

So, would all the people who have not been number one stand up? Either slowly or quickly.

And would — now this is not — there's going to be some overlap. It's likely not everybody's going to have two new people, because of the way things work. But at least try to go to somebody that you haven't been with. Or definitely, yeah, go to somebody you haven't been with and see if it works.

Let's see how it works.