Movement lesson

Angela 2 — Week 6, Day 6, Session 4 — 58 minutes

Summary: Standing, then lying, then sitting, Russell guides attention along the midline and the central plane. Hands meet at the plane, the head differentiates from the arms, and the legs open toward the midline. Rolling with one foot standing turns the spine, and sitting variations explore the same plane with the eyes.

Standing

Please stand up.

Bring your attention to that midline through your body. Start from above you. Come down through the top of your skull, through the palate, the front of your cervical vertebrae, down through yourself, whatever your image is.

When you get lost, go back. We can grow this ability. And then down.

Can you think of going through the golden ball with this line, in front of your sacrum, behind your lower belly, and through the bottom of your pelvis, down into the earth?

Can we have a sense of inhaling down, down, down, and exhaling up?

Have an image of this plane going through us, this central plane, and just let your arms be drawn up to the sides. Bring the palms forward. Let your eyes be softly open, and feel, as you come forward, when you can see both thumbs, so that you're not turning your head.

Wiggle them if you want. Then let the hands come toward each other slowly. Close your eyes and wait till they're a few inches away, and really be there for that last bit. Feel where they touch. Are you surprised?

Feel where they are, then open your eyes. Notice if you're a little left of midline or right. You might be.

Open your eyes again, and come close this time. Keep your eyes open.

Palms and fingers touching, bend your elbows. Let the fingers point towards the ceiling. Soften your knees. Soften your connection to the ground.

Then move as one piece, so you're not dropping the head. It's the same distance between the hands and the head. Come down and up along this midline. Knees bending, your rear goes back a little bit.

This time go about half of what you're doing. Pause there. Leave your hands there and lift your head back to neutral, but see if you can not move your hands. Bring your head back to neutral.

Back to the hands, and then both come up. Feel that mid-plane. Look over, down.

Fresh stance. The arms are carried — they're kind of lifted by some other force. You're not effortful.

Coming to the middle. Turning, letting the elbows bend. Coming up that plane.

Still looking forward, can you track that plane? Feel when your shoulders do something different, when there's some sort of challenge, when it's not quite as smooth as you might like. Come back, and then up again, where you feel you're starting to waver one direction or the other.

Let your hands fold over. Come down, still looking to the horizon. Reach down a little bit. And up. Turn the hands, and this time as the hands lift, follow with your eyes and head.

Let your eyes and head stay there. Lower the arms, hands back to where you started. Head and eyes stay up, and return with the hands.

You're along that midline. You're thinking midline. Now keep the hands where they are. Lower the head and eyes to neutral, to the horizon.

Feel if your hands start pushing on each other. Keep them light, with your head and eyes.

Lower the hands and separate them. Just feel what starts happening through your whole body.

And then please lie on your back.

[Silence 48 seconds]

On the back

Maybe take off your glasses.

Put your arms out to the side at shoulder height, palms forward, palms towards the ceiling.

Just feel that width across yourself, the length of the central axis. Imagining that plane — even if that's not so clear, or obscure, keep coming back to it.

Think of the middle of your pubic bone, the middle of your sternum. Think of your sacrum, the middle of your sacrum, the middle of the back of your head. Middle of your forehead, middle of your chin.

Slowly let the arms be carried, as if by strings from the ceiling, where the plane meets the ceiling, and let them come slowly. Listen for infinite smoothness.

The little jumps are helpful for your brain to activate fibers that get skipped over.

When the hands come to touching, palms and fingers, feel the mystery of the moment of meeting. There really is a kind of exciting connecting in the brain, when the two hemispheres activate in the moment of touch. The two sides, the two become one, literally.

Let the palms and fingers know each other for a moment, and then open out again.

Pause with the arms when they're down this time. If you're comfortable with the arms wide like that, keep them there. If that's a bit of a strain, then lower them.

We'll just pause here, feeling the width and the length, the vertical and the horizontal dimensions.

And the breath coming and going.

Tune into your legs, and just have the imagination of your knees going to the side and the feet going toward each other. See if you can find it. You can start just a little bit.

Start with one leg, either leg. The knee comes out a bit to the side, just the beginning of that, so you can feel the shift in your pelvis and back. Just one leg, and then the other.

Feel how the foot comes up the middle, and see if you can feel where the foot is in relation to the midline. Notice it when it crosses, if it crosses the midline.

The knee is kind of popping out to the side, and you're experiencing the way the pelvis turns, the way the lower back yields. If possible, keep the heel just to midline, not further. The knees stay open if possible. We're not coming the feet to standing.

Then you can begin to slowly let both legs bend, and let the feet feel that moment where they come toward each other, and let them touch also. If possible, the knees are open and the soles are touching. If that's a strain, then you don't stay there. Lengthen the legs, and come back to that.

Listen to how the movement of your pelvis can help the legs to come up. There's a way in which you can let the knees open. There's a kind of extension in the back that can allow that.

That's good. Pause for a moment. Leave that.

[Silence 48 seconds]

Feel those strings pulling on your hands, so it's as effortless as possible. The arms get lifted. The palms find each other.

Keeping the hands together, let the long arms go down. The elbows stay long, and the hands go towards your pelvis, and you feel the rolling of your shoulders. You can look up with your head. You can look where the hands are pointing.

Lift the head off the ground to look where the hands are, but let the head be lifted by the shoulders and chest as much as possible. Less activity in your neck, as much as you can.

Then go just towards the ceiling. There's a rolling of the shoulders. The hands don't go overhead. They go towards the ceiling, and then down towards the pelvis.

Let your eyes help your head to lift. Let your shoulders and chest — the sternum folding helps the head to lift. That's it.

Pause for a moment. Just rest with your hands anywhere you like to have them.

[Silence 47 seconds]

Arms out to the side, hands at shoulder height. Can these strings pull you up, and the hands find each other at that mid-plane? You can vary. It's good.

Now, as you bring the hands overhead on the floor, also let the legs bend. See if you can track that movement. Knees out to the sides, feet coming toward each other as the knees open.

You're tracking that mid-plane all the way through, from feet to hands, through your pelvis, through your head.

When you lower the hands towards the pelvis, the legs get long and your head lifts. You go through that whole action.

The legs will bend as the arms go headward. The legs will lengthen as the hands go footward. See if you can track that through your whole body, following this plane.

As the long arms go headward, the knees bend out to the side, the feet find each other along that mid-plane. The hands might go to the floor, or get near the floor somehow. Then as the hands go towards the ceiling and continue towards the pelvis, the legs are long, and the head lifts.

That's it. You're tracking that through your whole body.

Pause. Leave that for a moment.

[Silence 2 minutes]

Turning left

Bring your arms out to the sides. Bend your right leg to standing.

You might move a little bit towards the door for this action.

The hands are lifted from those strings, and keeping the elbows long, lower the arms leftward. Feel when the support of your standing leg will be helpful, keeping the knee vertical.

Feel — let that go all through you. We begin to bring the horizontal axis in —

You're lowering. Feel when you can push off your right foot to help the arms comfortably go leftward. Feel that movement harmoniously through your whole vertebral column. Let the eyes go leftward.

Keep that right knee vertical as much as you can. Don't let the right knee drop down to the left. It can move an inch or two, but it's mostly a standing leg.

You're feeling how you can let your chest vertebrae really rotate in this position.

Keep your knee more vertical if you can. That's it. Good.

When your arms are over to the left, stay there. Feel into your chest. Lengthen your right leg. Let the heel come to the floor.

Come just slightly right and back. Slightly, just an inch or two, and then back toward the floor. Then a little bit more to the right, a little more toward the ceiling, and then back to the floor.

This is really getting your back actively connected to those hands. Feel how your pelvis can support your turning of the vertebral column. That's it.

Back a little, and forward a little, and back a little. As much as you can, don't push vigorously off that right heel. You can push a little bit, but it's mostly more proximal, more towards your center. That's it. Good.

As you come back up this time, just lower your arms and pause.

[Silence 41 seconds]

Turning right

Arms come out to shoulder height. Bend your left leg to standing.

Just take a few moments to feel your width, to feel your length.

Imagine that plane going through the ceiling, and where there would be the spot that the ropes could attach, coming to each palm. Feel as they get pulled, those ropes, and the arms are passively lifted somehow.

With the palms together, slowly lower rightward, but keeping the elbows long. That's important, that the elbows don't bend in this, because we need to activate your vertebral column in the places where it's maybe a little dormant. Keep that left knee as vertical as you can, so that you're conscious. You're not just folding down.

Because again, if you just let the left knee go to the right, you don't have to turn in your vertebral column the same way. You'll skip some vertebrae.

Go through a number of times, letting the whole spine turn.

Pause over to the right and lengthen that left leg. Then just play a little bit towards the ceiling, a little back towards the floor. How can you be active when that leg is not bent? How can you do something in your core?

That's it. As much as you can, don't let the left leg get stiff. Let it go through your core, that you're activating the arms from your pelvis and back. That's it. Great.

Come back to neutral, and go all the way through neutral, leftward. You're not trying — you don't have to get to the floor. You're just feeling where you can go, how you can be active in your pelvis without getting stiff in your legs.

You might go to the floor, but you don't need to. It's not the goal. You're really inviting the turning, letting your pelvis get active with the hands. That's it. Letting your head turn, your eyes turn. There we go.

Come back and pause.

[Silence 33 seconds]

Sensing the room

Think of that horizontal line. Let your arms come out. Think of that horizontal line, that width, that dimension.

Just imagine the space all the way to your right. Imagine the wall all the way to your right.

Send attention out to your left. Imagine where the wall is.

Imagine, in a headward direction, where the room would end. Just send your attention out that way, and then in a footward direction.

Sitting

Now we get into some of the, I think, more fascinating variations. Roll up to your side and come up to sitting.

You may need to adapt yourself, because some of these can be a little bit challenging. First, just sit any way you can comfortably. Good. You can sit up. You can grab a chair if sitting on the ground doesn't work. I don't want you struggling with your sitting.

You'll sit for a little bit, then we're actually going to be kneeling.

Think a chair would be? What do you think?

If you're in a chair, let your feet be well connected to the ground. Excuse me.

Hands come up. First feel the plane. Feel where your nose is on the plane, and just bow forward, following along that plane. You're coming out of your back. You're not rounding your back. The back stays long, and the same distance between the hands and the head.

Pause when you're forward. Keep the hands where they are and lift your head. See if you can differentiate your head from your shoulders. Bring the head back to the distance you were before, and then lift the head.

The constraint — move your head any way you want, just don't move your hands.

Head and hands toward each other, and then both come up.

Now close your eyes, and keeping your head where it is, move your hands to where you perceived they went before. Where is that? How can you find that distance?

Move the hands back. Move the hands forward. How can you find that? You're on the midline, and you're listening for the distance.

With the hands near the head, go both forward again. Leave the hands there. Bring the head back. Can you lift the head without pushing the hands away or toward each other, so that they're not getting stiff?

Lower the head, lift the head. Keep the head up. Bring the hands towards the head. With your eyes closed, bring the hands back to the same orientation as when you bowed.

Bring the hands back along the midline in front of your face, and then back down. Look at your hands. Let them come back, and then pause.

Think of your long vertical axis. Rest your hands now.

If at any time the people on the floor think a chair would make it better for you, or sitting over there, that's fine. Or changing your sitting position. You don't have to maintain this.

Bring your arms out to the sides, palms forward. Eyes closed, find the midline. Open your eyes. Look where you are. Bend the elbows.

With the hands touching and the elbows bent, fingers oriented towards the ceiling, turn your head and your arms and shoulders to the right. Notice where you're looking. Come back to neutral.

Turn to the right. Notice where you're looking. Keep your hands where they are. Just move your eyes to the left, eyes to the right. You're not moving your head. Eyes to the left, eyes to the right.

Look forward. Notice where you're looking. Come back to neutral, and then turn once again to the right and notice where you look now.

Not pressing the hands together. Keeping them light.