Movement lesson

Angela 2 — Week 7, Day 2, Session 3 — 57 minutes

Summary: Russell guides a floor lesson on sensing the sit bones, sacrum, and lumbar spine from the inside, and on moving from the hip joints rather than an overused lumbar. Students roll the pelvis over each hip, practice lower-belly fullness and the pelvic floor, then move the head, arms, and legs from the center.

Sit bones and sacrum

And so start sitting just any way you want for right now on the floor, and just feel how you and the ground meet — what's comfortable about it, and if there's anything challenging right now in either hip joint, or either side of your bottom, either side of your back.

If your legs are crossed, feel the opposite direction, the other one in front. Just get the feeling of that.

And just begin to get a sense of the shape of your sit bones relative to your sacrum, relative to your lumbar spine. Sit bones, sacrum, lumbar spine — whatever your inner perception is.

And as you come to your sacrum and lumbar spine, notice if your attention is on the back, where you would be touching the floor, and also see if you can move your attention to the front — the front face of the sacrum, which faces your lower belly, and the front of the vertebral bodies, also facing towards your lower belly.

Yes. So when you bring your attention to your sacrum and your lumbar spine, notice the tendency to bring your attention to the back, where they would be touching the floor if you were lying down. And notice if you can move the attention to the interior, as if you were at the front face of the sacrum and at the front of the vertebral bodies.

And please, let me — I'm going to get the skeleton, just to bring it on.

Okay. It helps if you hit the pause button and you unpause it.

So here, sitting with the skeleton, looking at the sit bones and the front of the sacrum and the front of the lumbar spine, how all that connects to the hip joints.

So this movement, back and thrust — what it's like not to do that primarily with the superficial abdominals and with the superficial erector muscles, but going quite deep into the pelvis. And that's the distinction. When Moshe says you use no muscular effort, what he means is no unnecessary muscular effort, and to go deeper into the core.

And hopefully, as we differentiate the hip joints a little bit more finely, and just do little bits each day of coming back and forward, forward and back, hopefully it gets a little bit clearer, and you start feeling a kind of potency in the middle.

And that was one of my hopes in wanting to spend a number of days working with this. And then somehow also coming in to just sitting in chairs. I mean, even when we do the chair lesson, we'll do some on the floor, but I think that could give you something to really take home. That'll be meaningful.

Can you bring him back up and onto the sit bones and put the golden ball in there? Just like a vision.

Huh? Yeah. Well, you want the sacrum and the lower lumbar, both.

So if you find your belly button, go down a couple of inches, and then go behind there, you'll be right around where your lumbar and sacrum meet, probably. Two inches down, around.

Well, when you actually do it, that lumbar curve is exaggerated. Yeah, there is what we could call a natural lumbar curve, and then there's a tendency for a lot of people to exaggerate the lumbar curve.

Yeah, in the bending, there'll be, for most people, a kind of — it will get more curved and less curved as you move.

But it's like the difference — if you look at me as an example. If I come forward on my sit bones, and I'm not intentionally working in my lumbar spine, my lumbar is going to come forward a little bit. To come forward and up on the sit bones and bend in my hip joints, there's going to be some giving here.

We want to distinguish that from people who come to sitting and erect themselves from the lumbar spine, without the differentiation of the hip joints bending.

There'll be a natural curve in most people that will yield as they come forward. And so you'll see a curving in the spine, but it's very different than when the movement is done from the lumbar spine, which most people do because they don't articulate their hip joints anywhere near the possibilities.

So one of the lessons that we'll do, I think tomorrow morning — that you've already done — has to do with differentiating the hip joints from the lumbar spine more precisely. But we're going to go into it.

And so today I want to do a lesson to just kind of move towards that, and then actually go further. Does that make sense?

To relax that exaggerated lumbar — because again, like Moshe says, we move where we sense ourselves. And since most people don't have a good sense of the deep interior, or of how the pelvis and the hips articulate, since most people don't have that really clearly, they'll tend to do everything where they do have it more clearly, like here. And therefore people overuse their lumbar, and it creates, as you know, just a lot of trouble.

Now, it doesn't mean we don't want the lumbar to move. We just want it to move in harmony with the articulations, the hips, the deep musculature.

Coming forward and back

Okay, so let's start sitting, and put your feet out. Rather than having your legs crossed, put your feet out, just kind of resting on your heels, knees bent a little bit, and feel how you could come back a little bit and come forward.

And as you come back, it's not at first rounding the back. So you're not primarily coming back by lowering yourself. You're first coming back by feeling how you could have your long spine and your head on the horizon. And that your head feels free.

Can you feel the movement over your sit bones?

And if you start feeling any kind of shortening in front, you want to see, could you push out in your abdomen? Rather than pulling in, in your abdomen. That's one way to make sure you're not shortening.

Now you'll still be getting some tone. That's way different than shortening.

I'm feeling, doing like this, a lot of gripping. Yeah, make it a little bit lighter. There will be activity in there for sure, but we don't want it to — we want the whole, again, Feldenkrais picture, that when there's an even distribution of effort, then it doesn't feel effortful.

An even distribution of effort doesn't feel effortful.

Rest your legs for me.

Just feel your breathing.

Really put your hands on the floor behind you, and feel how you could lower yourself back down. Not by supporting yourself with your hands, but your hands forming kind of a guide — you're not giving all your weight to your hands, but you'll feel your hands. It's like if you were pressing on something, you're not going to squeeze it a lot.

Now, it'll be a lot easier. Notice the difference. If you have your hands forward, how you can roll over your hands. Whereas if you have the hands back, you get locked. Can you feel that? Does that feel different?

So let the hands be forward, so you get the sense that you're going kind of towards your elbows. So now we're just kind of playing with the legs being wider, and too, your eyes and head being wider, on the horizon. And you don't feel like you're pressing. You're not just holding yourself up with your hands.

So what do you hold yourself up with? It's not your hands. Try to find something else.

So we want, just like I was saying in standing, the knees and ankles to be soft and yet differentiated from here. So let's look at getting that a little bit softer.

Lie on your back. I'll do this piece first.

Finding the hip joints

Just enjoy the support of the ground.

I know it's already a lot to come in, sit in the morning, walk the labyrinth, talk about all that, and jump right into a deep movement lesson. That's good. It's just a lot.

You must feel the breath and the ground.

And your feet be — oh, something like the width of your pelvis. Not too wide, not too narrow. Not really wider than your pelvis. Movement will be more difficult if the feet are too wide. Have a feeling that the feet are kind of under your hips.

Just tune into your left leg and sense how you can sense the living in your left leg. Now you're alive in your left leg.

Yeah, louder. Okay. Thank you for telling me.

So sensing how you are alive in your left leg, the signs of life in there.

And if you kind of sweep your attention from your pelvis, however you sense the three-dimensionality of your pelvis, which includes the back of the pelvis, the back of the sacrum on the floor, and then flipping your mind to the front face of the sacrum — which, for those people for whom that feels obscure, it's learnable. It's not clear for almost anybody at first, but it really can get to be more than just an amorphous space. But the way that gets there is by bringing your attention.

Okay, where — okay, I can feel the back of my sacrum on the floor. And now, well, how can I even go about bringing my attention to the front?

You can go in through the lower belly, as if you're looking at the sacrum.

And then do some sense of where those sit bones would be in this lying position.

Left hip joint, focusing on the left right now. Your picture of that, your left sit bone, and just lightly roll, turn your leg, rotate your leg a little bit. And you saw on the skeleton how close the sit bone is to the hip joint itself.

So we think hip joint — don't only think of the outside of the trochanter that you can feel when you lie on your side, but go deep to there. Deep, and a little bit higher than the trochanter.

But it's surprising how close the hip joints are to each other. So it goes in quite — the neck of the femur is quite large from the trochanter to the actual joint. It's quite a space, quite a distance.

So let me just interrupt you once again. Let's just sit up for a minute. Just for some people, it really helps to get a visual on this, to get kind of another level of clarity. So let's take the moment to get this sense.

Because again, most of us, our first proprioceptive awareness comes by our contact with the world. So when people sense their vertebrae, they're generally sensing their spinous processes. And to go inside takes another kind of commitment in the awareness process.

You know, for your students, or for most of us, it's much easier to feel where we touch. So for many people, when you say feel your hip — well, actually, I've told you this story. I had an orthopedic surgeon who was showing me his hips, right? Because these are colloquially called the hips, the iliacs. But it's really funny, in his own self-awareness.

But so let's be clear. Hips. Right, well, colloquially, people will talk about these being hips. Yeah, but they're not. I mean, we could talk about women's hips in language that's feasible, but hip joints are. Yeah, right.

If we're speaking more precisely, these are your iliums, but colloquially these would be your hips.

So hip joints are what we're talking about right now.

And if you look at where the trochanter is — when people refer to their hip joint, and they're thinking here, there's a real gap. And you can sometimes see that in people's movements. They don't get it. It's hard to get how deep the hip joints go, and that this is significantly higher and more internal than where you can feel it.

So if you find your trochanter — and that should be pretty prominent, you can feel that. And if you bring your attention in, at least a couple of inches, two and a half inches or so, and a bit up, you're pretty much directly above your ischium, for most people.

Okay, come back down.

Over the left hip

And just lightly roll your left leg. Just feel the location where you can sense the meeting of the leg and the pelvis.

And as the leg rotates outward, let the knee bend out a bit. Just kind of slide the foot up a little bit. And then just the left leg will do right now. And sense that.

Yeah, just go slow, and many times, so that you can feel the articulation, and open on that side.

Of course, you'll probably sense the right side of your pelvis lifting a little bit as that knee opens out. And you can extend your attention across your pelvis. You can sense the sacrum — the right side of the sacrum gets a little lighter on the floor, and the left a little heavier, likely. Maybe you can sense something like that.

Good. And then find a comfortable place for the left knee to stay open to the side, so drag the foot up as far as you like, to make it easy to keep the leg like that. And bring the right leg to standing.

Keeping the left knee bent open to the side, you can adjust where that leg is. So the right leg is standing, the right foot is standing. And we're just going to go through that helpful movement of rotating your pelvis over your left hip joint, as if you're coming out of that right side. The right foot goes into the floor, and as the pelvis rotates leftward, you're articulating around that hip joint, over it. But let the movement give you some detail about the sacrum lifting. Where the ischium is, and how coming out of the right hip joint helps you to rotate over that left hip joint.

So do that a number of times.

And place your left hand on your lower belly, just above your pubic bone, if you can, near there, and let the back of your right hand come to your sacrum as it lifts off the floor, and then you can actually lower the weight a little bit onto your hand. So your sacrum gets clear from behind, and you project your attention between your hands, so you can feel deep to your left hand, where the sacrum would be.

And you're rotating around that left hip joint, and as you do a few more times, let your head rotate right as you move your pelvis left. See if you can find that smooth movement.

Good. When you feel satisfied with that, you can just lower down and take a pause. If you're still getting value, you could do it a few more times.

And see — so you can take off your glasses. I'm not going to do any more visual stuff with the glasses.

And of course, listen to how the two legs might be lying differently right now, the two sides of the pelvis.

[Silence 31 seconds]

Over the right hip

Okay, begin to tune into your right leg, and how the two legs are a little bit different at the moment, and see if you can have any precision on that.

When you tune into your right leg, how you can sense how you're alive in your right leg.

And just lightly turn the leg so you can feel that hip joint, and go more precisely into the way the leg and the pelvis meet, just kind of rotating it at first. So the right leg rotates.

And then gradually, you can begin to let the knee open out to the side as well.

And find a place that the leg can stay open, where that can feel comfortable. If, for anybody, this position doesn't feel comfortable, you can always use a pillow under your knee or something. Ask yourself. And bend your left leg to standing.

So your right knee is out to the side. Left leg is standing.

And bring your attention into that right hip joint, the picture of where the sit bone is, the sacrum, and then begin to rotate your pelvis — the left knee staying vertical — you rotate around the right hip joint, many times.

You might put your right hand on your lower belly, above your pubic bone, and the back of your left hand on the sacrum, and sense between your hands.

More clarity in this region is so helpful for the deep support we're wanting to grow.

So the left knee stays vertical, and you're pushing off the foot, so you rotate the pelvis to the right.

That's real. Imagine that golden ball.

And notice how you could do this movement with much more work in your lumbar spine. See if you can feel how you could activate this movement from a contraction in your lumbar spine. You feel that?

And you can do it more as a turning of the pelvis, where the hip joint articulates as your prime mover. And when you're articulating the hip joint, the lumbar spine does articulate, but nowhere near as much, or as vigorously, as when that's your prime mover.

Great. And then a few times, quick, and let the head go to the left as the pelvis goes right. Just kind of get more casual about it, less serious. So it's nice to get that twisting in the spine, where the head and pelvis are in harmony.

That's good. And then lengthen your legs and pause here.

[Silence 49 seconds]

Fullness and breath

Stand both legs.

And what we're going to do is take a breath, pause with the breath, and get that feeling of creating the fullness in the lower abdomen without letting the lumbar spine move forward very much. So it's a fullness down towards the lower belly and towards the sacrum. It's a pressing down and back.

You'll probably feel the forward fullness more, because we can feel that in our belly more, but don't let it become a pushing forward of your lumbar spine. Not intentionally.

And you're creating that fullness, and you're just breathing there. So it doesn't have to be as much as you can do. But I was aware that you clearly feel an intra-abdominal pressure, but it doesn't feel like tension. It feels full, and you can breathe.

See if you can feel that, and think towards the front of your sacrum, and also towards your sit bones. So the floor of the pelvis is here, and you're not doing it so intensely that you can't breathe easily.

So you might need to modulate. People often do this too intensely. Want the freedom of breath.

And then slowly pull in your belly, and pull the pelvic floor up, in, and find a way to breathe where you're not — again, not doing it so intensely that you can't breathe. But find a way to breathe without releasing the lower abdomen. Without releasing it so that there's a sense of skin loose. And you're breathing much more in the upper torso and the sides of your torso. You differentiate.

Slowly. Press out, press out, and down.

And the next few times, for the next minute, you breathe. As you exhale, push out and down. As you inhale, do anything you want. But on your exhale, you put a hand on your belly, feel your lower belly, feel your belly come out, as if you're pushing down and out with your exhale.

You can inhale any way you like.

And just to help this be a little clearer, exhale in steps through your mouth. What I mean by that is you go, pause, pause. I'm exaggerating, so you don't have to do it quite as loud. But when you exhale through your mouth a little bit, pause, exhale through your mouth. But each time, you're feeling some wholeness in your lower belly.

And your hands on your lower belly might be helpful. If they're not, you don't need to use them. But if they're helpful, get that sense.

And as you might remember from our second week of the program — you might forget also — this fullness with the exhale is a great empowerment for our center.

Some of these ancient treatises on Zen, and they talk about breathing out with this fullness.

Then just go in and out in your abdomen a few times. Just kind of make it light and easy, in and out. Breathe down. When I say out, I also mean down, and down. And see if you can just breathe comfortably as you do that. A few inhales as you keep doing that movement, a few exhales.

And if it's not easy, if it's not familiar, this is a really important movement to experiment with. Want it in your repertoire.

Okay. And leave it, lower your legs, pause for a few minutes.

[Silence 40 seconds]

Across the pelvis

Yeah, let both legs open out to the side. Let the soles come toward each other, the soles of your feet.

Feel the hip joints open like that.

And do a movement of your pelvis where you can lower one knee towards the ground, and then the other knee towards the ground. So it's a movement across your pelvis. Feel how you can do that.

And as your right knee goes down, turn your head to the left. Then the head comes back to neutral as the knees do, and then turn your head. So your head's going opposite to the knee that's going down. A number of times. So when the head goes left, the right knee goes down.

A little faster, lighter, more playful.

Feel that movement really coming from deep in your center.

Right, okay, lengthen your legs and walk.

From the center

Interlace your hands under your head.

And again, thinking of your golden ball, thinking of the middle.

Feel how you could slide your arms and your head, bending a little to the left, and then do the same thing to your right. Think as if the movement — like you're a starfish, and it comes from the middle out. And in this case, your head is like a limb, right? It's from the middle out.

And let that movement really begin from the interior, from your core.

And then stay down to the left, and have that feeling of pushing down and out in your abdomen, and pulling in and up. Down and out. Think as if the fullness is going towards your hip joints. Stay to the left, a number of movements, down and out. Feel all the way down to the floor of your pelvis.

That's good, and slide back to neutral.

And then let's come to the right side, from the golden ball.

And again, that fullness downward. And in and out, in and out. Light and full and easy. Not as much as you could do, so that it can feel smooth. And you can use that inner intra-abdominal fullness to help you sense the front of your sacrum, and to bring your attention down towards your hip joints.

That's good.

Okay, slide back to neutral, let your hands come out, and rest for a few moments.

[Silence 43 seconds]

Interlace your hands non-habitually under your head.

Now, thinking from center, from deep in your pelvis.

As you slide your head and arms to the left, let your left knee bend out to the side. Let that be like one movement coming from the middle.

And then as you go to the right, let the right knee bend out to the side. Go back and forth like that.

And feeling as if there's just this kind of turn in the golden ball, like it rotates a little bit.

That's good.

And as you come to the right, and the right knee bends, let the foot come off the floor. How would you lift the foot from your middle?

And then let it come back to the floor, and go to the left, let the left knee bend, and let the foot lift. How would you activate the center of yourself to lift that a little bit?

And as you keep doing that, and lift the foot, also lift your head.

So the foot lifts, and you're lifting your head, but again, it's a feeling not so much that you're lifting with your arms, and certainly not with your neck, but from your center is primarily moving.

And your elbow might go a little bit towards the knee as it lifts. You're not trying to touch it or anything, but let the elbows come toward each other a little bit. That'll help.

And the elbow and knee kind of go toward each other as the side bends, and you're kind of the unusual animal that moves like that.

So it's a bending and a little flexing also, but all from the —

Good, good. Pause for a moment, lower down.

[Silence 36 seconds]

Circling

Let the arms rest while you pause. Feel the breath. Feel as the middle of you is getting more present in your image of yourself.

Interlace non-habitually under your head.

And as you slide to the right from deep inside, and the knee comes out, the foot and the elbow come off the floor with the head, and they come toward each other, and you flex a little bit, and you rotate towards the left.

The head goes towards the left as you lower the leg towards the floor, and the left leg begins to come off the floor.

So you're kind of making a circle with your upper body, and your legs come down, and you go to the other side, letting the knee pop out, and then lowering down again. That's it.

You're just going back and forth. It's not actually — it's like a half circle. Your legs are opening, the elbow goes towards the knee.

You lower the head when you need to. The feeling is that the elbow and knee kind of go toward each other, and then you can go back down to the floor, slide along the floor, and let the other knee

bend. And then every once in a while, keep the head off the floor, and go right across the middle, and then back to the floor.

The whole point is that you're moving from center. You're able to move your head, you're able to move your legs, your arms — everything is moving from deep inside.

When you need to rest your head, you slide along the floor to get to the other side. And you can go across the middle, holding the head up.

That's it. Good. Okay.

And then, finally, let both legs be bent at the same time. Let both feet come off the floor. Both hands and elbows, and then move an elbow towards one knee, an elbow towards the other knee.

That's it. And you can lower the head and the feet down, going toward one side, coming around, coming up the other. So there is a circling of the elbows, and the feet can come down in the middle.

That's it.

So at one point the elbow goes towards the knee, the knee towards the elbow, then the other elbow, then you go back down to the floor. And so the legs need to get very light, need to get very soft, because they're carried from the middle. The knees have a feeling of just being carried. The ankles have a feeling of just being carried.

That's great. Okay. And lower down, pause.

Lightly rotate both legs. Let's lightly turn your head. Good.

Bend both legs to standing. And roll to your side. Come on up to sitting.

Up to sitting

Keep that. Let your legs be soft. It might be easier if you're on the wood, if you find the blanket cumbersome. Just kind of let the legs be soft.

And your arms are at ease, and just kind of lowering back and coming up. You want to get that feeling that the legs are at ease, and the arms can even be kind of like you're conducting an orchestra or something. You're at ease, but somehow all the activity is coming from the center of the starfish.

And you're just starting to get the sense that maybe everything can be light because your center is so active.

Okay. Good first step.

Come up to standing. Walk a little bit. Feel what you like about it, if there is something you like about it.

[Silence 49 seconds]

Many reports from the front line.

And some way to go. Well, there's still some way to go. Still some way to go.

Yes.

Alright, well, we're at lunchtime. So we'll continue at 3:30.

Just a reminder: if you think you want to meet with me, sign up for a time, because I won't. If we get towards the end of the week and you haven't signed up, I won't be adding times. So it's not necessary to sign up, but if you want to, make sure you don't get aced out.