Discussion

Angela 2 — Week 7, Day 2, Session 5 — 89 minutes

Summary: Lying down, the group takes a bird's-eye view of what is alive to celebrate and what is currently challenging. Sitting close, they share gratitude, edges, and the pull between enjoying life and offering it. Russell speaks to freedom, listening in the don't-know, and how the meek place can liberate.

Bird's eye view

[Russell:] Take a few moments to lie down.

You're not going to actually do a lesson, but just take a few moments to connect to yourself lying down.

One of the questions that has worked so well in my family forever — and now, having Lily home for a month, once again we get to experience it. Each night, part of our ritual is something from today that you're grateful for. That you can celebrate, or that has touched you in some way. And then we go to something that was challenging.

It always invites a kind of intimacy with each other, even if we just do it briefly. Just the sense of meeting each other's moments.

And often we will have the moments of gratitude done in present tense, and then moments of challenge just told as what that was.

So I offer that as a gift for your relationships. Because if there is an interest, or a willingness even just to do that, there's some way in which it's different than just griping about the day. It's a context that seems to help. Some friends of mine have also taken it up. They speak about it. It's helpful.

So, in a slightly different way, I want to invite us to reflect on our life right now. That step back, as if you could fly above your life. You have the bird's-eye view.

Can you imagine that your consciousness can be free from your body, and free, actually, from only the current situation? Consciousness, in my experience, can be free from time. Only when it gets bound to self-identity does it get encapsulated in time, and then there's the past and future.

One can have an experience of a bird's-eye view of life, and have a sense of what I'm currently grateful for that's alive in my life. Not only in this particular moment, lying on this floor — although that might be the strongest thing — but taking that bird's-eye view of where you've been, where you're going, where you are. The current relationships, the current practices, the current ways that you're in touch with your deep inner life. Or the highest and deepest. The ways you're in touch.

In the Platonic sense: truth, beauty, and goodness. Goodness being love. Beauty being whatever touches you aesthetically. And truth being the way some of us really resonate deeply when we get clear about something.

So that large view of what you're appreciating, what you're celebrating, what's there, what's alive. It may not be totally pleasant, but it's got this sense of rightness. Or, to use Linda's term, your right relationship to that particularity.

Just take a few moments. Maybe your inner life will surprise you. This is also a kind of listening-speaking, a listening process. I'm going to pose that question to your inner world, and just be curious what comes.

It might be something you're familiar with, that you've thought about a lot lately. Or it might surprise you. Or it might be a few different things that want acknowledgement.

Just another few moments. If you step out and into that big view — step out of the nitty-gritty of this, the demands of this moment — what are you celebrating? What are you grateful for? What are you valuing?

Just to let that in.

And you'll have time to go back to that, but let that go for now. If we had one of those Etch-a-Sketch games, kind of shake it so there's a blank screen again. Just an open space.

A new invitation. And now you're inviting: what am I working with? What's my next — might have an S on it — edges, or current challenges? What am I navigating? What's part of my current unfolding?

These are different ways of looking at the same basic question.

And again, not from inside, there working on something, but from that bird's-eye view. Looking at the one lying there, and that sense of their life. The big view.

If what comes is something that feels very familiar, an old thing that you've acknowledged many times, invite your inner life to show you something new about this moment with this. Or anything that would like to be acknowledged. What makes it more than just the same old, same old? What is fresh about it? What might even be the right now? It reveals itself.

And take a little bit more time. As always, it's wonderful to let your inner life surprise you, when something comes that you didn't think before, or know before, but has some new flavor to it. See if that is there, that you can invite that. Even with old subjects.

[Silence 36 seconds]

Let that go for now, and just come to any other lying position. If you're on your back, you can be on your front. You can be on a side. Some other comfortable position, but a different orientation in space. You're not in the same gravitational relationship. Something that's really different.

And in this different relationship, again — whatever meaning you get when I invite you to lift out of yourself and have this bird's-eye view — that includes you here, you at home, you where you have been lately, where you're going. It includes that big view.

And just invite a few more moments of both sides. What you're valuing, appreciating, celebrating — and challenge, edge, next. And they might be the same things. Sometimes they are.

Giving your inner life a carte blanche to speak, and you are in this larger place, receiving. Maybe being surprised by what comes.

[Silence 31 seconds]

And just one last question. If what comes, once again, is familiar, see if there is anything you can learn that's new about it. If you just ask that question in your inner world. If you just put out the invitation: show me something new about this familiar something. See if anything is there.

Good. Leave that.

Please come up to sitting.

Sitting together

[Russell:] Let's come in a little closer. You can bring chairs if you like, bring your cushions if you like, but a little bit closer in than when we've been sitting.

Sitting around the campfire here. Silk and rose and crystal campfire.

Would you like me to lower it a little? That's okay?

As you know, I like to spend a little time connecting with each other.

You need me to speak louder? Just close. Okay.

And please don't hesitate to remind me, because sometimes when I go inward, I go lower in volume. Okay?

The way that I would like to invite us to meet right now is around these questions. And there's no demand. You might not have anything to say that you want to say now. Or you might not want to speak to both of those questions. It's really up to you.

It's an opportunity for us to come forth as we're growing this group mind, this stew. We're bringing whatever we're bringing into it right now, and that will influence us in some ways. But as always, and essential from my understanding, deep work must be done in freedom.

So that means we're not under the demand of an authority. We're in the request, the invitation. And I always truly honor your right to say, I don't feel like speaking right now. Or, I just want to speak about this, and nothing else.

I will speak more about this. It's getting deeper and deeper. I just have to say, now, this issue of human freedom, and the movement toward freedom, and the oppressiveness of the oppression we are living under.

And we are the most privileged people. And the oppressiveness of the oppression we are living under, because of the systems we have been raised in. And that needs to be seen really clearly, in my opinion. I'm seeing it more and more clearly over the last few years.

It's not that it's a new insight — the absolute importance of freedom in relationships, and the absolute importance that a teacher not assume the role of the superior speaking to an inferior. But

the absolute essentialness that if authentic spiritual work, or deep learning, is going to occur, the dichotomy of that relationship needs to break down.

There needs to be a willingness of a teacher to learn simultaneously, and of people called students to be teaching. And that doesn't discount different kinds of knowing, different kinds of experience. But it's about looking underneath the implicit power relationships.

And it takes a lot of consciousness. It's very important. I'll get to more of that later, but it's living in me very much so.

Well, since I have the floor, I'll say a little bit more about my answer to these questions, just to start us off.

As always, I like to pause and see if what I thought a minute ago is still — too much. So.

I am celebrating just how much I enjoy my living. How much I enjoy living, even in my conflicts. When I say I'm enjoying my living, I'm not meaning to imply everything's wonderful. It's like I'm just finding myself rarely in conflict with my life. And I really celebrate that.

And when I think of the edge that comes up most right now, it's like a simultaneous — they feel like, at this moment, different directions. Somehow I know they're not, but at this moment they feel like two poles.

And one is just to enjoy living. There's a part of me that doesn't really feel that there's any need to do anything else.

And then, more than ever, feeling the wanting, the responsibility, the dedication to sharing the blessings that I've been given. And I felt that for a while, but feeling a kind of urgency about it. Somehow the sense of being more connected to the larger world.

It's language that I'm uncomfortable with, but I don't have a better language yet. It feels something like being cognizant of something like forces of darkness working in this world — something in that direction — and the need to stand up for living truth.

That I'm so grateful that Moshe Feldenkrais got me on the floor to feel myself so much. And that other teachers, including Gene Gendlin, got me so much in touch with my feeling life. And that being on the cushion for so long helps me to come through the substitute reality — the world I create to represent life — and bring me into direct connection with life.

That this, for no good reason, came my way, and I was able to hear it, and am able to hear it, and work with it. It just feels like that is the antidote. Or at least the only antidote that I've been given.

And so this feels like there's a strong urge to be more active in the world, sharing these gifts, bringing it to more people, getting it out there. Taking more responsibility to help people who want to be teaching this kind of work.

So some sort of urgency. And some sort of — I just want to live, and go to the beach with my wife.

And I know they're not fundamentally in conflict. And at this moment, there's something about finding the right expression. Right choices about my time and schedule, and all of that.

Yeah. It feels not right.

Sharing

[Participant 1:] So, when I was at Russell's talk last Friday in Bend, and he was talking about waking up — the things that he's taught — I have to say that I could feel what he was talking about.

Before, I could understand what he was talking about, but at that moment I could feel it. And I'm so very, very grateful that my life has changed that much.

And so I felt, especially in the last year — someone said this, and I feel like it fit me really well. I would love to heal. I'm called to heal, but I'm reluctant about it. It's like something that I'm holding.

I just want to go walk the river with my wife and quilt, you know. That's what I want to do. But I know that I need it.

And also getting this message, like it's really urgent. More than once. Several times I get this message that it's very urgent to do this. And I have had my heels dug in, and going, well, maybe I'll just miss the boat. And I've been stoked, and I walk on the river.

I've been working a little bit with some people. They come to my house, and I go through the meditation and the movement, and some resource building.

I did that with this one woman who is not an unenlightened woman — an energy worker, a healer herself. And at the end of the session she said to me, very authentically, from herself: what's the point?

And it sort of floored me, the question. Because I'm like, what do you mean, what's the point? Don't you get it? It's presence. I get it. How come you don't get it?

And it threw me for a loop a little bit. And I've been thinking a lot about what is the point.

And the universe has brought into my life this information around eating. And it's not about the food that's going into my body, but about the relationship that I have with it. Slowing down. Increasing the quality. Breathing. Feeling pleasure. Not being distracted. And listening to the wisdom inside.

It's sitting in there so brilliantly. It just is. And it has such a resonance with the embodied life.

And I finally went, oh. And I have this willingness to not be reluctant anymore, and to stand up. And I know that — I've heard Russell talk about this before — this strength of integrity from inside that can push me through those uncomfortable boundaries that I want to stay within.

And one of my neighbors is a shaman and a healer, and she used the term standing nation to describe the trees. And I loved it. And that's what it feels like. There's this standing nation that I can draw strength from. And that I want to just go to people and say, okay, let's do this together, because this is what I'm learning, this is what I know, and I want us to do something together.

And I haven't figured out really exactly how that's going to go, but I know it's coming, and it fits.

And so the challenge that I have had today — and part of the reason why I was considering not being — is that I'm heavier than I have been in a long time. And when I'm like this, it's very difficult. It's more difficult. It's challenging to be on the floor, and to get up off the floor, and to feel

my ischium, you know, my breast. I mean, I'm like, is it somewhere under there, right? I know, but I can't feel it.

And the challenge being not how I am, but that when that comes up, when that inner feeling comes up, to just give it love. And to love myself over and over and over again, to the very best of my ability, the way that I am right now.

And so that came up for me. Well, that's what's going on for me right now. So I think that's good. Thank you.

[Russell:] All right.

[Silence 2 minutes]

[Participant 2:] So, I think the word place is the word that, for me, is a celebration.

Something about feeling a place in all my various lineages. So cool. And the interweavings of those — dance lineages, like spiritual dance lineages.

Somehow, just something about it being a nexus of all these different things coming through. And that my place is a place. That my nest is a place in an evolution that's in a bigger network. But it's very nice to feel that.

Somehow that — yeah, it's an uplifting sense. And something about a lot of acceptance. Taga, which has always been so desirous to accept. And a real sense of space, and who knows what's in the future as it proceeds. But there's some kind of a force behind it that feels very trustworthy.

And just one of the things I was very touched that you brought up — this piece about freedom and authority. That's been such a key personal issue for me.

And I'm just fresh from an experience of kind of downloading a system of dancing to a group of women. And I was called the director. And we had these performances that would come, that were the culmination of our time together. Almost three weeks of time together.

And how uncomfortable it was to be called a director, when the system of dancing that I was sort of transmitting to them is very much about collaboration, and very not about being directed. But the habit of not having agency is so strong.

You can't just clobber somebody with, here's your agency. It's so interesting to feel that. And it was a really interesting process, and I learned a lot. And actually beautiful, wonderful shifts happened for people. But it wasn't as smooth or anything. It was rubby. And wonderful.

And I found this work, and our time, and our habits of how to be together — it was so helpful. One day I chose to have individual meetings with each person for like forty-five minutes. It was so nice, instead of our — you know — four-and-a-half-hour group rehearsal, or whatever, five-hour thing.

It was just a very nice way. Everybody had something — allowing, and listening, and focusing, and different things. It was wonderful to just hear people. I think it was a step in the process of each of them taking the reins for themselves.

So anyway, there's something in your language there that really reminded me of that.

And how happy I am to be feeling, in that dance work that I've been doing for thirty-five years, that whole crossing of spiritual paths. It's all in there. It's very, very — celebrating, making.

And I'm very grateful for all my teachers, and travelers in there. All of it.

[Russell:] Thank you.

[Participant 3:] Good. Now. While I look, the word that comes — the word I would pronounce — is riddle.

And I'm very grateful to be free most of the time. I don't say remain, but be free most of the time. And remain free from, I would say, insidious temptations and influences.

It's something that I can see at every step of my life. Even as a child, as a student, as a professional. And currently I'm living — the name of my street is Rue de la Liberté. It's ten years now I've been living there.

[Russell:] You might move to Rue de la Fraternité.

[Participant 3:] And so I'm so grateful. I think I have a tendency to be free, and to be — meaning, there is a strong relationship between freedom and openness, in the way I feel freedom. To be able to be open to something different, and integrate things that come from different sources.

And I'm very grateful to have it — Miriam, and my teachers, and you, and that there's a lineage of teachers. It gave a framework for freedom.

And I can use it in my daily life, in my professional life, in my business. But not so much different, because I help people to manage other people, so I'm a kind of director.

And I can be a jerk, and people can be free. I can do it myself. And so that's not a problem for me. And it's something that the people like, because life is very different.

So what's the challenge? The challenge is to remain free. But it's so ingrained, in a way, that I'm not —

Well, what came to this: the challenge is presence. It's understanding. Standing up for presence, I would say. A moment for freedom. Because I think that's what's important for the world.

And I can do that in many situations — having freedom through presence.

So, back to the question: how can I stand up for presence?

[Russell:] That's a beautiful question.

[Participant 4:] That also connected with what each of you shared. And I'll start. Give you a moment.

So, last month I'm teaching this retreat at Snowbird that I've done for many years. A restorative retreat, morphing into the embodied-life day-one thing. And I do it at the Cliff Spa at Snowbird, which is a beautiful place.

And so after the day is done, at four o'clock, I'm floating in this salt pool on the roof of the Cliff Spa. These snowy peaks just right outside. With two dear friends who I know — they came to the retreat, and I know them through the Buddhist tradition, or connections in that way.

And we're talking about our lives, and lineage, and teachers, and all of this stuff. And a friend of mine, Vicky, is floating in front of me and talking and chatting.

And she was talking about being — we both share a history in Tibetan Buddhist tradition, but she's trained as an MBSR teacher, mindfulness-based stress reduction. It's different. Some people have issues.

And my truth detector, absolutely, in here, just goes ding and lights up. And she says: I am really willing to stand unapologetically in my place in all of this.

And I almost get tears. And again, truth bumps are coming. That's a living edge for me.

And there's something in the unapologetically part that feels really tender, really relevant. And I'm surprised that I'm getting to that.

So there's a — in a lot of ways, this growth edge that I'm drawn to is like, you know, loving into liberation is one beautiful image. Also shedding the skins of the apologetic part. Or the part of me that can be so discomfited by my own well-being and good fortune, and how fucking much I have in my life, you know?

Like, oh, I'm sorry. I'm stressed. Sorry. So that's an edge.

And then, celebration. I'll just say briefly, because I probably could go on for a long time about what I'm feeling, celebrating, and grateful for.

I was just considering — seeing — I'm used to calling her by one name for the last three years, so transitioning into another. Who's been a student, and done some of my women-of-body class in the last year, and other people in that realm.

And just saying, so this is one realm. Starting another group again like that. To see what happens with this work, as imperfectly as I transmit it, as apologetically sometimes. It's amazing.

People who are — the lives are blossoming. Amazing, in so many outward and inward ways.

And another — we just had this wonderful retreat in Costa Rica again. Just such an interesting, wild experience. And a lot of the local expat community was coming in and out of our retreat container.

And just to see these people who — everybody is a yoga teacher there. And at first they'd be so weirded out about going slower. Some of them loved it. But so many people came up to us, shocked. Like, wow. I don't even know why that was.

People who are steeping in this, their philosophy. And to hear the woman who owns the place we did, how touched she's been from the week we spent with her last year. And so she gathered all the local community to come and visit here.

I have one more thing that I'm really psyched about. Carla and I have had the wonderful opportunity — we've been invited to teach at this session thing they have. It's a local Zen center. They have students who come from all over the world to do their week-long retreats a few times a year. And they've had us come to do lessons to make sitting easier.

It is so awesome, how brilliant the Feldenkrais lessons are, with an embodied-life emphasis. Again, people from all over. It's so fun to work with meditators. They're so available.

And the last thing I want to say about that: one of the co-teachers, I guess, is Mike — or is it your day? We were talking with them in a different context. We were talking about somatic practices and the work we do, and he's like, yeah, Zen isn't very embodied.

What are you doing? Being connected with it as a space. That's wonderful to me.

So anyway, much to celebrate. Thank you for listening to me. But I'm not a public —

[Participant 5:] Yeah. Something happened last year, when all of you supported me by being here. It completely catapulted me. It launched me to new frontiers, literally.

And I'm so grateful for all of you to support that. And I'm really proud of myself. My voice said, I don't think I can do this. And then Russell said, wait a minute, we might have another plan. And I said, okay, what is it?

And I said yes to you when I would have said, no, I don't know, I don't know. But this is my work. This is what brings me lots of joy. And this is how I change, and this is how I help change people's lives. And I get to be here. Like right now, I'm here. It's incredible.

So I just really want to bow to all of you, because I don't know what I would have done if you didn't support me. And these are tears of joy, of course.

And I really am experiencing so much freedom. Not only in a physical place, but a mental state, and my connectivity.

One thing that I'm really proud about, that I haven't done in probably eight years, is that I hiked South Sister. And it's a ten-thousand-foot climb. I went with a friend who was very much team support, and it took us seven and a half hours.

And I didn't know if I could do it, and she really said, come on, you got it, you got it. And I really was feeling my feet, like literally feeling my feet on the scree. And it was a little bit challenging at the very end. And the view on top was amazing. And I asked her if she would meditate with me, and we did.

And I rode my ass off this year on my mountain bike. I just feel like something is happening with my physical, and more joy. And the practices are deepening.

And even though I'm lighthearted, I take it seriously. And I've been gathering friends at the house and saying, do you want to come meditate at seven-thirty on Thursday?

And I've been doing Feldenkrais with Dwight. It's like another piece of clothing, you know. I reach for my Feldenkrais outfit and I reach for my meditation outfit, but it's all in me. All in my fibers.

And my work is changing, and there's a lot to share, but I have a lot of opportunities. And you said something also that really stuck in my mind, maybe a month ago. He said: destiny speaks through the heart, the belly, your dreams, the wind, and surprises. And listen. To listen well.

And I know that you know I'm intuitive. That there's something else, and it's my wisdom body, and it so guides me. Life is meaning me. This work has totally transformed how I do things.

And my friends see it, and they ask me. They want to know too. So I always say, Russell. They know Russell by his first name. They know the embodied life by Russell. And it's kind of cool

that they know — hey, what are you doing in March? Do you want to go to Portland? There's an embodied life weekend.

It's becoming so much more than I ever would have imagined. And I just feel like I have so much access to my life. It's there for the taking.

[Russell:] That'll be nice.

[Participant 6:] But for me, I'd like to speak to the embodied life passport, which I feel I have. You know, after doing that, I'll have my certificate.

Anyway — so many doors in my new life in Arizona. It's amazing. And I'll share it, just if there's another student who's in process.

She's a professor at ASU. She was in a class I was taking that was actually awareness through movement, and invited me to come to her class. She's the director of women's studies. Russell had mentioned her before, but I didn't make the connection until she did.

And it's been extraordinary. It was an amazing semester, by invitation, based solely on the fact that I'm on a biology certificate. I was able to join her class in gender studies. Really edgy, wonderful stuff. And there were all these great students. It was wonderful.

And it's made this move to Arizona so much more extraordinary for me. Because it could have been anywhere, and it still can be. It's just that vivid now.

But in that thirty-thousand-foot view, as I looked down at my life, which is great — I can't help but notice my spouse, who's not. And I feel comfortable enough to say: I may have made a horrible mistake.

I need encouragement to retire. Because there was so much boredom and sadness in his world that I had in mind. And I had the bridge of all this. They didn't.

So we are in a place where people just golf, or watch TV, the weather channel maybe. It's really stressful. And I need to help them. And I'm just not finding it in myself. I think I have the tools, but I am just so busy enjoying myself and my life. And I just bring that into the picture too.

So, sorry. I just wanted — there is a challenge. I suppose.

The don't-know

[Russell:] I think what I've heard, and what I think is true, is there's a magnetism that happens when you are enjoying this life. And strangers gravitate. But it can be your pal — those closest to you — if they're not with you in it.

Let me think. And stop looking at that.

So thank you for speaking. You've been consistent.

Family. Yeah. And can I mention what I mentioned on our walk?

So it's one example of what I would call a really excellent subject — to use this opportunity to explore something that you have no idea how this could work out.

And so very often, when something's important to us and we go, I can't imagine how this could work out, we kind of put it in the box of, well, I don't want to deal with that, because there's nothing I can do about that. That's finished. I blew it. I don't know how to deal with that.

But what I'm saying is, those are the exact subjects that the inner world, your wisdom body, knows something about that you don't know yet. And especially the places that you have written off. Those are so deep, and so — there is no way of being with that that's life-giving.

And I will suggest, from the bottom of my heart, that there are always ways of being with our conditions that are more life-giving and less life-giving.

And to give our inner life the opportunity to enter the don't-know. I don't know. But how do I listen to myself when I'm in I don't know?

So we'll have the chance, in some of our listening processes. And there'll be some times in the morning, in the afternoons. The next three afternoons we'll spend time in groups of three, and I'll describe how that practice will work. And you'll all have a chance to look at things.

Sometimes looking at somebody else's issue, or what's living for somebody else, and how that resonates in you, will reveal something about you that you were so surprised about. Many of you have experienced that.

But there'll also be times, I'm hoping, where I might invite somebody who would like some guidance. Like to journey with me and look at something, because it can be helpful for others. And I do that — if you offer the permission, I'll just do that freelance. I don't do it in terms of any system.

I just kind of hang out with you and we look together, and I break all the rules of all the systems, you know? But you're always in charge.

I've got two needs right now. One is —

We prefer not having that, of course.

Great, thank you.

Further sharing

[Participant 7:] I'm so enjoying hearing each of you. Especially knowing you these years, past years, and hearing you speak from this place of familiarity. It's remarkable. I just appreciate your openness. And I appreciate knowing each of you. Being together.

And I didn't know I would say that right now, but I'm feeling this appreciation as I say it. Which is interesting, because one of the things I struggle with is feeling this lack of emotional — I don't feel like I feel engaged, or interested.

I struggle with this kind of chronic fatigue. It's just this sense of — it's very hard to describe. Almost like I'm not really here. Like I'm not transparent, or something. It's a strange feeling that I've been dealing with for quite some time. A long, tired lack of vitality.

And so I say that, and I feel this appreciation. It's very refreshing. I feel it's touching me.

I mean, I'm blessed with a very easy life, and I appreciate that. I think for those of us who say we'd like to be — who recognize that part of us that wants to walk along the beach — the fact that so many of us could have that choice, have the option, is such a blessing in itself. So few people in the world today have that choice. And nothing to pooh-pooh.

But there is, too, in me, this part that doesn't just want to take walks, as much as I love to take walks. And take naps, as much as I love to take naps. And pet my cat, as much as I love to pet my cat.

So I've been working. I've had an opportunity the past year to do some individual work. A couple of people came to me. I do my own combination of movement and focusing, and meditation, which is my own. It borrows from this, but it borrows from everything I've also learned.

And it's been satisfying to feel that received in a very positive way. The first time, really. I opened work in therapy, in a small way — just traditional therapy, but within the movement work, as a whole gestalt of working in a more embodied way. Being received positively.

[Russell:] Can you hear?

[Participant 7:] Yeah, I'm okay.

It's very satisfying. And also I've been trying to — I've set this goal for myself of completing this little book I had started with my friend who died last year, on infant motor development.

And it's a tremendous challenge. It's a challenge to find the energy to do it. It's a challenge to envision it. The reality of it. It's a challenge to ask for, and use, the support that I need to complete it. It's just a challenge on so many levels.

But I really feel like I want to make the effort to complete this. If I do complete it — Sandy, the woman who worked with me, she would always say, this is really important. And I was like, Sandy, we can't just say it's important, it's important, it's important. We have to write a little more to describe what's important.

But I think there's something important in what we put together. And I hope — I think it can get done. And I'm kind of giving myself a year to try and finish it. So that would be really something.

[Participant 8:] Oh, in viewing things — one of the things that I have been appreciating lately is the power of the perturbance. I think that is what it is. The power of a perturbance. Which isn't something that I usually seek out.

But there's a sense of agitation that has been happening. And when I say agitation, I want to be clear not to — it's not an emotional agitation. It's more the agitation of change that's been lurking in life.

And it was completely — I cast these changes forward. And the blessing of them is the discomfort. And seeing some of my historical ways of being coming forward, to be worked with. And some new things that are coming, in the way that I've been relating with my husband.

It's just that the newness has just started something. It's shifting something that has led to greater connectivity. And so it's new to feel gratitude around that. And it inspires my practice.

The thing that feels challenging to me is this sense of — and even the lessons speak to it — this comfort that I have in going inside, but not wanting to come out. It's a matter of wanting to go to sleep, but not wanting to wake up. And it seems to be a fairly familiar theme for me, but very much with me.

And the question that I now have, with a little bit of delight, is: is it possible that there's a way out by going in?

Is it possible — one of the things that's on my plate, that I really have said that I want to do for years, is to teach. So is there a way to be all the things that I find in here? Comfortable, sustained, connected, safe. And still reach out into the world and be of service?

So I don't know. And I don't know the answer. That's kind of what's chilling in here.

Thank you.

[Russell:] Who could go next, if they still have time?

[Participant 9:] I know what I want to say, and I don't know how to say it.

Something I don't talk a lot about. But it revolves around celebration and my challenge, and it is how much I love life. And I don't know. Thank you.

And it's got to do with liberty, something I think about a lot, and the oppression that's out there.

[Russell:] Can you speak up a little bit?

[Participant 9:] Yes, sorry.

The oppression, liberty, all the themes here, and loving your own life.

And so, coming here in the last — well, we're almost on three years. January, our first time together. That wisdom body was telling me something wasn't right, and knew something. And then about seven weeks later, I found out that I was being stalked by somebody I knew since I was twelve years old, and trusted, and loved, and all that.

And it has evolved into — this guy uses highly sophisticated techniques that even Snowden hasn't revealed yet. And it essentially has put me under surveillance, day and night.

And I can talk about it a little bit more now that people start to realize that it's a possibility. That that's even being discussed publicly.

And through various methods that he's able to perform the stalking. I've even been likened by him to a caged animal, living in a zoo that he's watching.

And the photos of the lions were so interesting to me, after Linda talked about them last night.

And that's — I discussed this, I think, on our second segment together. How this person I found out had — I had no idea to what degree — had betrayed me, and had infiltrated my life. And I was pretty devastated, for so many reasons.

Coming back on this last segment has been such a grounding experience. Because I can physically sit here and sense the difference of where I was then, and where I am today. This minute. This second.

And I have not stopped living my life for one moment. I don't accept any of what he is doing. It's very difficult to catch him, but it will happen.

And I call on my resources that we've been developing, pretty much constantly.

And I don't know what our term for yoga off the mat would be. Embodied life. Maybe it's simply embodied life, I think. So an embodied life, pretty much every minute of my being.

And it's a way also to really think about, when I think about what's happening. Sure, it's changed my life a lot. Technology is a very different interface for me than it is probably for most people here. I don't view it as safe. I don't view it as communication. I don't view it as a lot of things that other people see it as.

But I also really want to not go to one extreme. And I'm noticing my shift of not really caring anymore about that. And I had my background in the Buddhism, and how the perception of what's happening — how I can change that. Because I see him in prison. I don't see me in a zoo. I live my life every day. I don't think that he is.

But the embodied life — the celebration for me is that I not only live my life, I'm loving my life. And I'm feeling this wide open, grounded sense of myself that is stronger than I ever thought. It is always strong. I never questioned that in my life. But it's different now.

And I'm probably going to recite the Guest House at the end, because that poem means everything to me. When I first heard it here, I just wailed. I mean, that's what I felt like. I was being cleared out. And now I feel like, oh, this is what cleared out is. Hello.

I fall off the wagon sometimes. And murder, or something similar, could certainly cross one's mind under certain circumstances. Sort of like being on the freeway, as people say.

But the challenge is to have the compassion for somebody who would do that to me. He's not a stranger. And do it to himself, to his family.

And so I had a lot of compassion, actually, in the beginning. I felt almost — sometimes I think back and I'm wondering, where did that come from? I guess there's been stages of this. And I think I might be back to the point where I could start having some compassion there.

I think I'm stronger. And there's a separation. There's space. Spaciousness here.

So it's been — pretty much I've been with you all throughout this entire challenge. And all of you, in your own ways, have been my strength, and my teachers. And there's more learning, but I do know that this is — this isn't going to hurt, where I take this someday, wherever it ends up.

I think that this is a pretty good basis for using this work. And the challenges that are coming to this world, let me tell you. When we talk about liberty, we are in for it. So we've got — we can use this work that way. And it shows you so many places we can go.

Thank you.

[Russell:] Thank you.

The oppressed and the oppressor

[Russell:] One of the challenging, or paradoxical, observations that has gotten clear for me. It's actually in that gesture of humility. It's finally understanding why the meek shall inherit the earth, which I didn't understand all that deeply until recently.

Is the recognition — and I don't want to talk about it, but I just want to put it out there, because it sounds so weird. Let me see if there's any resonance for you.

But it's actually the oppressed. The apparently oppressed places in us. Or those places where we seem oppressed. The oppressed liberate the oppressor.

And in fact, the oppressor can't liberate the oppressed.

And we think it's through our strength that liberation occurs. But our strength just reaffirms itself.

The oppressors, or the dominators, or the dominant voices — even in their kindness, even us in our kindness as dominant voices — tend to subjugate that which we think we're liberating. It becomes further dependent upon us. It finds its own weakness in our strength.

So it gets another level of spiraling complexity. It can end, but it ends in the mysterious willingness to embrace that vulnerable place that looks like the problem. That we're convinced is the problem.

Can you just — probably not. What we can do is have it in the pot, because it will be stirred. That also. And to see through. To see the ways in which the voices — I can speak about this in terms of between people.

Thank you.

I really want to stop at six. I need help. Thank you for being so reliable. We'll come back to this. It's an interesting subject, don't you think?

Because we have this in us, and between us, and all over. And it is time for a break, and we're going to come back. Keep your pillows here, because there are three more people who I want to have speak before we begin our evening practice. So I'd like to complete that now. Yeah.

[Participant:] Please. Will you give more instruction on walking meditation with joy?

[Russell:] With joy.