Movement lesson

Angela 2 — Week 2, Day 2, Session 5 — 58 minutes

Summary: Standing, then lying down, Russell guides attention through the tanden and the breath. Four-phase breathing joins a gentle rolling of the pelvis, a whispered exhale, and a sweeping of mind through the spine and out along each side. A slow roll from front to back ties the pattern to rhythm, and the session ends in rest.

Standing

Yeah, standing is good.

Just feel your breath. Feel where it's clearest to you in standing. Weight in your legs and feet.

Bring your hands to your center. Moshe would usually call this area the Tanden — T, A, N, D, E, N — Tanden.

In Japan, it's usually referred to as the center of the hara. But Tanden also has many meanings, and this is one of the main ones. So in Qigong, where the Chinese call it dan tien — Tanden. Some of you have heard of Tanden in Japanese.

He did a number of lessons focused in this area. The judoka, of course, this was central to his understanding about how movement works in the human being.

And just notice if there's any feeling of breath through the golden ball, through the Tanden, and back — towards the back, and down towards the sit bones and the space between the sit bones.

And when I say that, please don't push. Please don't force. We want it to become a natural unfolding. Your awareness, your interest, has an influence, but you don't have to add ambition to it.

And bring your hands further up. Bring your hands through the upper belly, and just feel there's some movement there related to breath.

The sides of your hands come to the sides of your ribs. The backs of your hands come to the sides of your ribs. And notice, without force, there's lateral movement.

The upper chest, below the collarbones, above the breasts. And notice if the upper lobes of your lungs, in this region —

The best attitude is one of curiosity, interest, not something of effort.

One hand central on your chest, just below. The fingers can touch the clavicles, but the palm is resting on the chest. And the bottom hand — the fingertips can touch the pubic bone, but the palm rests in the lower belly. And just notice if you can track the breath.

Does one move more than the other? Does one move first? Does one not move?

Feel free to change over your hands whenever that feels right.

Next few breaths, intentionally have the four-phase breathing. It doesn't have to be long pauses, but clear pauses.

Finally, notice if you can bring your hands, either the fronts or the backs of your hands, behind you. And if you can be a little higher — not quite down onto your pelvis, but slightly higher — if that's comfortable, do so. If that's not, don't. Use the backs or the fronts of the hands.

Just notice if there's any indication of breathing towards your hands.

Lower your hands, and then notice throughout your whole system. If you have a more global sense, where is breathing obvious? Where is it not so clear? Where it seems present, or not.

Please come onto your back.

[Silence 41 seconds]

On the back

Notice the movement of breath. Notice where breath is most present as you scan through yourself.

Include the whole torso, from the bottom of your pelvis up towards your shoulders, including your back and sides. Lower belly, mid belly, lower chest, upper chest.

Put your hands on your lower belly, with your fingertips down towards your pubic bone. So your hands can be kind of one next to each other, and the fingertips can be near your pubic bone.

Bend your legs so your feet are standing. And notice any sensations under your hands connected to breath.

And with a gentle intention, the picture of the breath sweeping through you — sweeping through your skull, down through your spine, filling your pelvis, continuing through your pelvis, and up and out. Just a few times, sweep your mind through.

Mind and breath sweeping through the body is a really helpful skill to develop.

And as you inhale, let the pelvis roll forward a little bit. Exhale, let the pelvis roll back.

Forward, meaning the lower back coming away from the floor. Back, the lower back coming towards the floor.

And let there be — yeah. So inhaling, you're arching your back a little bit in your lower back. The pubic bone goes away from the sternum, and then what I'm calling coming back, the pubic bone is going towards the sternum.

And you're inhaling, going away, pausing, exhaling, coming toward. Just see if you can find that rhythm.

And notice if you can have all that. An awareness of the breath under your hands, the four-phase breathing, the gentle movement of your pelvis, all living together. The mind sweeping down, sweeping up.

And as you're sweeping the mind through the body, it's so helpful to let the sense of yourself, the presence of your mind in different locations, with the breath, invite a sweeping through any places of congestion. Not staying there, not breathing into them, but through them. Through.

So if there's anything along your spine that would like some space, pull your mind down and through, all the way down through the bottom of your pelvis, and then back up.

Pause with that for a moment.

[Silence 53 seconds]

Bend your legs if they're not bent. And the sense of inhaling, coming down through your spine, filling your pelvis. And begin to think of your lower back, letting that be present — the whole sacrum, lower back — that the breath can permeate towards your back, not just towards your front.

Just think into there, as if you're filling out that whole region with breath. It goes through there, and then goes up and out.

As you're exhaling, you're filling the pelvis, filling the lower back, filling downward, and let the exhale come through your mouth with a shh sound.

The exhale, shh.

And you inhale, thinking all the way down through you, all the way filling downward, opening down through the pelvis, and exhale. And shh.

As the exhale goes up through you, a subtle sense of lengthening through your spine. Inhale is down, fills you, goes through your pelvis, and the exhale goes up and out with this shh. As if there's a wave leading up your spine.

The right side

Now, lengthen your right leg. Keep your left leg bent.

Inhaling comes down, fills your pelvis. These can be sweeps of mind. It's not a lot of detail. So it's a light movement of mind with breath, sweeping through your central spine, through the pelvis, and down your right leg. So it not only comes down through the middle of your pelvis, it also comes down through your leg, all with an inhale.

And then exhaling, like a wave going up and down. All the way up.

And let that go really through you.

And now we're going to add, with that inhale, the turning of your pelvis. So inhaling, sweeping the mind down, turn your pelvis rightward. The knee is vertical. And you're sweeping your mind through your pelvis and through your right leg — through the hip joint, through the knee, through the lower leg — as if there's an actual substance moving through you.

I'm quite clear someday we will measure the substance called consciousness. There's a subtle substance that can move through you. For now, let's link it to breath, so that thought and breath travel together through your body.

Filling. Filling the lower back, sacrum, pelvic floor, through the pelvis and through that right leg, and any places of congestion along that whole passageway. Through your central axis, through your pelvis, through your lower back, through that right side.

It's as if it's washing through. If it helps you, rather than thinking of it as air, it can be like a fluid washing through you.

Let it go. Let your head do whatever it wants to do.

Keep sweeping the mind through the body, connected to breath and movement.

Right. Good. Next few movements, we're going to do it a few more times. Have your head move left as all of this is occurring. So your head turns left. All of this is occurring down your central axis, through your pelvis, through your right leg.

Okay. Leave that. Pause. Lower your leg. Feel what influence that has.

[Silence 53 seconds]

Bend both your legs.

Begin thinking of the breath coming through from above, through your skull, through your neck, over to the right quadrant — the chest, the upper back, the shoulder blade — all the way to the middle, to your vertebral column. But that whole upper right. Just imagine breath sweeping in, and you can even have it sweeping down. Let your arms be at your side.

As it comes in and fills the upper right, it sweeps down through your right shoulder, your right arm, the right hand and fingers, and then the exhale sweeps up, and through the shoulder, through the neck, through the head, up and out.

And again, let your presence, your picture, let this sweeping of breath and mind through the upper right, so your shoulder is included. Think of your neck as included, particularly the right side of your neck. Think of the right arm. And a sweeping of breath.

So, inhaling. And let the exhale be a letting go, with a sound. Sweeping.

And so, letting go in your chest is a filling of that upper right.

Keep the legs bent. Let the sound pause for now, and feel. Make sure your feet and legs are in a good place, and listen that this movement feels right for you, feels good for you.

You're going to lift your pelvis and bring some weight to the back of the right upper quadrant, kind of behind your shoulder blade, or the upper right side of your back. It's like giving a target for your breath, giving a direction, giving an orientation.

And as you do that, you're breathing in the same location, through that upper right, down the arm. And as you exhale, you'll lower the pelvis back down and let the air go up and out the head.

Lifting the pelvis, feeling the weight into the upper right, as you feel that contact. Breathing towards those ribs that are pressing the ground, that lung tissue, out to the side also.

Let your head do whatever it wants to do. So you're lifting the pelvis, and there's pressure to the right upper quadrant. Organize your legs so you can take weight through your feet. And you're filling that whole upper right.

That's it. That's it. And as you inhale, even let your fingers come out as the air travels down that right arm. So there's a real feeling of this image and the breath connecting all the way through.

That's it.

Okay, pause. Leave that for a moment. Just feel the influence — the breath, the sound — how that works in you.

[Silence 39 seconds]

Bring your right arm upward on the floor, some comfortable place. Bring your left hand over to the right ribs, the right side of your ribs. See if you can find a way to touch, and just notice if there's any sense of breath through your side, any lateral movement.

And bend your left leg. And as you turn your pelvis to the right, you feel the space behind your left hand coming more to the floor.

So your hand is on your side, not up by your shoulder — over by your side.

And your right arm is upward, your left hand is touching your ribs, and you turn your pelvis, inhaling, thinking all the way through the whole right side, the ribs, thinking of the volume internally. As if there's a cylinder from your right hip joint, all the way through your right shoulder, and you're in the inner spaces of that cylinder.

It goes all the way to your vertebral column, comes around your side, meets all the way to the center in front. It's this whole cylinder. You can move where that left hand is, up and down, so that it gives you perhaps more direction for your breath.

And you're inhaling, filling. Your head is free to do whatever feels right. You don't have to be strict about the vertical knee here. It's in that direction, but it doesn't require a strictness. So we want you more towards your side with that inhaling, filling.

Let there be the image of your fingers coming out. So the inhale goes all the way, fills the right arm upward, fills that right side, and let your mind sweep all the way up and down that right side.

As you inhale, so the breath takes two directions. The inhale goes down through your pelvis, down through that right leg, over the upper quadrant, towards that right arm. The whole right side is getting long and filled with breath, the feeling of lengthening.

Let the waist come to the floor, the armpit come to the floor.

Let yourself continue, if this is comfortable, so that you end up on your front. Come over onto your front. You can take a moment to get comfortable on your front, and then I'll tell you where to put your arms and legs. Just come onto your front.

[Silence 33 seconds]

And have your right arm long upward. Have your nose pointing leftward. Have your left hand bent in front of your face somewhere.

Your right arm is long upward. You're facing leftward. The left hand is somewhere not too far from your face.

First, just sense how breath comes and goes. What you can notice about the coming and going of the breath, without your control of it.

Any comfortable movement down towards the golden ball, even towards the pelvic floor.

And intentionally pause your breath after the inhale. Feel how you pause. What you do in order to stop the breath without getting tight. And which is more comfortable for you — pausing after the inhale, or pausing after the exhale?

Just feel how different they feel inside. Don't try to pause too long. It's not about holding your breath. It's getting a sense of a space between the active parts of breathing, and that they each have a different feeling, a felt sense, to them.

One might be very desirable for you, one might be very undesirable, or they might be more neutral.

Notice. Moshe had a theory about how people hold their breath. Talk about that a little bit this afternoon, but just notice how you pause your breath, and when it's more familiar.

And bend your left leg so the foot is in the air. And imagine a sweeping of breath down through your spine, through your right leg, just like we were doing a moment ago.

And begin with the inhale, as that sweeping through your whole right side, to lift the right knee a bit. Get some support. The left knee a bit. Get some support from your left arm. And the foot begins to go rightward.

So it's not straight up. You're lifting the knee just a bit, so you can carry it. You can carry the left foot towards the floor on the right side of your body.

And let that go through your body. Go slow. We want to let your shoulder receive it. You lift the leg as much as is helpful, and not more. It's mostly letting your body roll, but you do need to find a way to free that left knee from the floor. It doesn't need to go too high in the air, just enough that it feels smooth.

Inhaling, as your left foot is reaching for the floor behind you. Let your whole spine roll with them.

Okay. And the foot comes to the floor as soon as it can, so you're not carrying it more than needed. And you get support from your left hand.

And the golden ball is quite present in the middle. That's it. Gently.

And the key with this movement for us now is to connect it to the four-phase breathing. Inhaling as you go over. And you pause, and then exhaling as you come back.

So there's a lot happening here. There's a complex movement, and a picture, an image, a sweeping of mind through that right side.

And you actually can feel — you might even feel — that you roll over that right side toward your back. And your foot can be standing, and you can actually meet the same position you were in a few moments ago. On your back, with the left foot standing.

So, feel if that feels possible and comfortable for the left foot to come over. You let your whole body roll. Let your head roll over your arm even. And you roll toward your back, if that feels like a smooth pattern.

So your leg is turning your pelvis. And the whole spine rolls with it, and the head rolls over the arm, if that's comfortable. And you actually come to your back, and then you push off your left foot, and you come towards your side, and then towards your front.

That's it. Let that get smoother and lighter, and the four-phase breathing coming forth.

That's it. And the movement is initiated both ways on an inhale. That's right. That's right.

And pause on your back.

So we're taking a movement pattern that you know, and we're making it more complex in terms of the attention.

It's nice, huh? And feeling the influence through your whole self. Of the whole body functioning in harmony.

And bringing also that sense of the breath having a rhythmical relation to the whole movement can influence what are usually thought of as living, involuntary parts of the nervous system. It's a way of rhythm and timing, done in this kind of a pace.

Because the breath is so essential, because it's connected at so many levels of your nervous system, all the way — the brainstem connections, the midbrain connections, the cortical connections.

Just resting here, feeling the influence.

[Silence 56 seconds]

The left side

Just allow a sweeping of mind from above you, through you, through your spine, through your pelvis, down. Exhaling up.

With the exhale, there can even be a very subtle lengthening of the spine, as if the spaces between the vertebrae invite it to be at their full length. You're not forcing that. You're inviting that — the breath, the image.

And begin to think through your left leg.

And again, these sweepings of mind are really helpful. In general, they're helpful for a sense of overall harmony in the body. But in our areas of congestion, or challenging areas, it's so often we withdraw attention.

Well, the only attention we bring is a very fear and pain connected attention. But to have attention move, sweeping through, is so helpful for those tissues.

Oxygen travels on your attention, and the blood flow travels, therefore oxygen travels. Oxygen is the great healer of the body, when it's in the right places, when it's in the blood vessels and entering the cells. Not the free roaming oxygen, but the oxygen that's central to the healing process.

So, please bend your right leg. Inhaling down through your pelvis and your left leg, and turning your pelvis with the inhale. Sweeping the mind all through.

Include. Don't skip over any of the places that are challenging. Go through those. Don't linger there. Bring the mind through those places.

So your right leg is bent, and you're turning your pelvis. And that's connected to an inhale, then there's a pause. Then exhale, and coming back, and a pause.

And so, thinking all the way down through the right leg. Include the knee, the ankle. Spaces in between.

Think of that whole pattern through the spine and through the left leg.

Pause. Keep your leg bent. Bend your right leg also. Bend your right leg also. I'm sorry, your left leg also. Thank you. Bend both legs.

Have both arms at your side for now. Both arms down.

And first, you're sweeping attention through your skull, through your left shoulder, down your left arm. And the exhale is a — let that go until the sound begins to feel disturbed in any way, then stop there.

And sweeping up your left arm, out your head. So it's down with the inhale, up with the exhale.

Letting the chest go, letting the shoulders go. Thinking of the left side of your neck.

Good. Good.

And now lift your pelvis in the air, bringing the weight over to the left shoulder area, and think of filling. So the whole pelvis comes off the ground, and you think of filling that upper left quadrant, in the front, in the side, in the back.

And fill with breath. Then, as you lower the pelvis — so there's a filling, pausing, letting go as you lower the pelvis, pausing. You might pause for a whole breath, and then continue.

Let your attention be really interior, inside the ribs, and the whole volume there.

That's good.

And lower your legs. Pause for a moment. You'll sense, if you don't direct the breath, where it goes.

Bring the left arm upward on the floor. Bend your right leg. Bring the right hand over to touch the ribs.

And just think into that whole left side, filling with breath. Imagining the three-dimensionality of the front, the side, the back — as if you were inside the cylinder of that whole left side, from the hip joint all the way through the shoulder, and then onward through the limb.

And you're inhaling, rolling left, pausing, and really let your mind sweep through that whole left side. Pause, and then roll back.

[Silence 40 seconds]

Feel the difference when you go, shh. Feel what comes alive with the shh. That's different than with the — feel what happens. Listen down in your pelvis.

Okay, rest on your front, please. Rest on your front.

Just take a moment just to enjoy the ground.

[Silence 51 seconds]

Feel the letting go into the earth. Feel the support.

Our deep inner letting goes are always connected to the sense of deep support. Deep — we're not in it on our own. Got something working for us, with us, through us.

And let your left arm be upward. Let your right arm be in front of your face somewhere. Bend your right leg, and feel how you can find your way slowly, with an inhale, rolling towards your left side.

Feel how that foot could come towards the floor. Go slow and smooth. You can use your right hand for support, your right arm, but let it be a smooth feeling of rolling. And that foot comes towards standing behind you — what will then eventually become your right side. But at first, it's behind you, and then as you roll, it becomes your right side.

And you come, all connected with an inhale going over, a pause, exhale, rest there, pause, and then an inhale coming back.

Pause, exhale, pause, inhale coming back. So the movement is initiated with an inhale.

Let the leg and foot find the floor. And once you have the movement pattern, then you're really scanning through that whole left side, letting breath and mind invite a spaciousness in the body.

Good, good, good. Okay. And as you come to your back, just pause there, please.

[Silence 32 seconds]

Rest

Feeling. Just in a global sense, how much of you is breathing right now, without your effort?

Is your back alive to breath? The sides? Feel down towards the bottom of your pelvis.

Just feel the inner quality, the inner rhythm.

[Silence 47 seconds]

And roll to your side. Come to sitting.

[Silence 54 seconds]

It's time for lunch.