Discussion

Angela 2 — Week 4, Day 2, Session 4 — 94 minutes

Summary: Russell invites a drop into being here before feeling, then opens a circle of embodied speaking and listening. People share joy, grief, compulsion, inner voices, and the edge between happiness and difficulty. He answers with living rather than fixing, and with growing capacity so more life can move through.

Dropping down

[Russell:] So I invite you to close your eyes and develop this practice of dropping down.

An important reminder for those of us who happen to be mammals — which is probably everybody in the room — that how we feel will tend to dominate the horizon if we don't give a conscious attention to I am here.

I want to suggest it's important to create a hierarchy in which I'm here on this spot. I can orient to that, and then find out how am I at this moment.

If we have the habit, as most people do, of going to the feeling state first, we can often miss out on the groundedness that is behind the how am I.

I invite taking the elevator down to your bottom, to your connection to this earth, and to your breath.

I'm here. The sound. That you're not only in a body, you're also in a space.

That I am here has more of a sense of neutrality to it. We're not so much consumed with I feel wonderful, I feel terrible, I feel this — but I'm here.

And from the I am here, we can also notice, and how am I in this moment of being alive?

As we all know, it seems so simple. You've heard it a thousand times, and yet it's so easy to forget. We need to hear it ten thousand more times, and keep practicing, till it's so spontaneous it's there most of the time.

The circle

[Russell:] And then, checking in with how you are. The invitation from the morning — you can get a fresh sense of what you're appreciating in your embodied presence that's growing. Kind of where your edges are. It might include your hopes, what you're working with. Just to acknowledge all that.

You don't have to speak to that when you speak. You can. If there's something else that wants to be said more, that's fine. But we will take time to hear something from each person. So our voice is in the group mind.

And we'll practice embodied speaking and embodied listening. A quality of presencing with our whole self.

Close your eyes, or open. I'd like to open the space for others who'd like to come forward.

[Participant 1:] I wasn't expecting to say this, but it's really what came forward for me.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 1:] And it feels right. I've been having a lot of fun in my life.

I'm playing in a room full of people. I've never done this, but I can hear myself and I can hear them. And there's been this whole process of something about that connecting on different levels.

And the other really fun thing — I've shared this on one of the conference calls — is that it's just a little bit that I practice sometimes, and the learning is so big. It's not anything that I have any prior history of, what I should or shouldn't do. Just having a fun time like that.

And there's something that happens that is so magical when I feel all of the music come together. I feel it in my body, and I never had that experience.

And there's another thing I've been doing that's really fun. I got myself an electric assist bike, and I live on a hill. I'm always in resistance to go out, and I'm riding everywhere. There's this feeling when I'm riding. I've never had a bike that's not all hunched over. I have this upright, and I can see the world, and I love it. I go out and I look at the trees and the sky, and there's something happening that's very different. I'm able to see things that I've never seen before.

So this is big for me.

[Russell:] Oh, that's wonderful. Thank you. I just want to acknowledge your presence sitting there, and where you're speaking from. It's a beautiful experience.

Grief

[Participant 2:] I'm being met with experiences of grief, and it's around supporting other people in grief.

On my way here yesterday, I visited a friend in Berkeley who lost her baby, and that didn't come quite to full term. She had an amazing experience of losing her baby in the birth. So I made a point to stop by and share a hug with her on my way up here. I'm so full of her presence. She's being amazing with it. It feels like an extension of this world of my being willing to be with her.

I wish to share tools with her, some kinds of ways to support her. She's open to that.

And there are people on my island. There's been a lot of 14-year-old suicide, and young people overdosing on drugs. We had a community gathering that was facing the tragic deaths of young people, and I sat next to this 14-year-old boy whose best friend was the one who committed suicide. I was drawn right into his experience, that sharing of the grief.

Part of their experience, him and his friends, is about losing support. When it first happened, there was a lot of community support and family support, and as the months go by, that support is less visible, and everybody else goes on with their lives. That's often the feeling when someone dies. I think that's also true for Diane, the mother.

But this boy sitting next to me, he finally spoke and asked, where'd everybody go? I need people to be with me still. His other friends were saying that too.

So I feel drawn to show up for them as they're coming around to the year anniversary this fall. I know it, anyway.

It's very powerful. It's almost shamanistic, to be with people going through that. They're sort of magnetizing such an intense life experience. And it teaches me so much to be around.

I don't really know where I'm going with this, but I know that it came up again as we were just sitting. Her face. Her eyes, when looking into her eyes. She's a dancer. She was so happy to have a body person.

I could only think that her eyes were like the ocean. She's so in tune with something so vast and big right now. I can just imagine this doorway of death and birth. It's like two things happening at the same time.

I'm so struck, so deeply. I feel weary, and my own sadness and grief, as we come here. I think I'm weary from a lot of things, but how do we be with that kind of depth of experience, in a busy, bubbly social world, without appearing to be an outcast or something? And how do I support people?

So I'm excited about this, because it feels so real and important. And I have a lot of joyful experiences in my life. I know with the boys on the island, I definitely want to do movements with them. They're like wrestlers, and just me and this boy had such an incredible hug after the thing was over. He's very physical, just very tangible. Feels like there's stuff there, too.

And it's exciting to mention it here, because the other thing is I'm completely confused about my work and what I'm doing and how to be, and la la la. So this feels nice to bring up. I feel the parts of me resonating with some of those questions. We'll just see. Just letting things unfold.

[Russell:] I could feel that hug that you had with them. What a gift. What a gift.

[Silence 44 seconds]

Passion

[Participant 3:] — is allowing me to — I can feel it. I'm not sure it's perceptible to other people, but somehow you really begin to act through a whole complex of problems I have. Let's say the arena would include compulsiveness, compulsion, and passion.

And I've had a great — and still have a lot to do with that, in terms of my own creativity. So that's kind of maybe closed. I don't know why I force you to look here. But I feel as if it's, in a way, another version of how my reactivity has changed, so that I feel more freedom of choice between expressing myself, and how I express myself, or not expressing myself outwardly.

I see it as my greater familiarity and comfort with it, and even the ability to address it, to share it, as a direct function of skills gained here. So that by really paying attention to myself in the best sort of way, I can honor the creative part of myself. Do it justice. At the same time, having some sort of sense that I'm in control of the compulsive part.

So it's something like — maybe this makes more sense — being able to save the passion without having to perform the compulsion.

And all of our work with the pausing, the witnessing, this directly liberates me from having to do one thing or another. And it just continues. It's very much a general tide that's rising.

[Russell:] Thank you.

A constant

[Participant 4:] Well, Russell, I'd like to mention that to everybody. Since we met last, my one constant has been really this group, with earth-shaking things, in great ways. We sold our house, we moved to an apartment, I've had big trips. And I don't think those sea changes, that maybe a person can experience once a year, compacted into several months, would have been navigable without this support.

I wouldn't say tools. That's not quite the word I'm looking for. Just what I've got through this group, this community. And what I've seen my colleagues do has helped me. I've actually had different pictures in my mind. Well, what would someone do? Or someone would say, oh yeah.

And then, on a different mission, at one sort of odd point in Seoul, where I was having a great time but a little consternation, I had an email with Participant 5, who said, well, that sounds like a great opportunity for focusing.

[Russell:] Well, yes. This was in Seoul, Korea?

[Participant 4:] Yeah. For a Reuters report. It was just a funny time. But there was some activity going on in North Korea.

[Russell:] Right, right.

[Participant 4:] They were kind of fascinated with what my reaction was. At any rate, just these moments where you could go so many different ways. And in Holland with a friend, again some blurry stuff, and she said, well, what about focusing? Wouldn't this be a great opportunity? And, well, yeah.

And then with Participant 1 every week, when we do focusing — these have been my ballast. And as a result, I think it's been extraordinarily wonderful. A few months. Really a year of wonderment. So, thank you. That's what I want to say. Who knew that this was on the pool table, but it was.

[Russell:] We could say it's felicitous.

[Silence 46 seconds]

Differentiating

[Participant 5:] So I wanted to speak. The first idea was I'd like to wait until the end.

[Russell:] Louder, louder please.

[Participant 5:] Sorry. So I wanted to not wait. I'd thought I'd like to wait until the end. So that's changed.

One of the things I have come to appreciate about the practices is this sense of greater differentiating, even some of the voices that I have inside, to the point where now some of my interior is

asking questions about some of my interior. And it feels a little psychotic. And it's spacious. Just a little more, less dense.

And one of the things I want to further explore feels along the same lines. A sense of almost different layers of membrane around me. I have a tendency to spend a lot of my time very focused, and I can even sense that visually. We looked at that last time, this idea of our eyes. Seemed really fun, but not only that.

Just in the ability to greet people in my day, and what that feels like. To be open to how that feels, as opposed to the sense of being small and protective. And I'm starting to be able to have some awareness around what guides that. The fear. The voice that is like, what are they going to need? And you have to do it, and oh my God, and all of that.

And I had an exchange with Participant 12 this morning. He had something that wasn't working ideally with our internet connection. To be able to have that experience and not think I'm not going to know what to do, and have it be almost delightful to ask a question without knowing the answer. It was like, well, let's go look.

And that's one of the things about being in this room. So big. Big up top. So that is kind of where I've moved.

Kind of the Martha Graham dance. Something's waiting.

[Russell:] Thank you.

Joy

[Russell:] Just a little louder.

[Participant 6:] In the last month, I've started to grow this interior feeling, or recognize that it's there, and it's powerful, and this can be a direction I can go in. It has to do with — we talked about this a little when I saw you — this navigating. I can find the centered space, but it's difficult.

For me, when I'm honoring all those historical voices — this idea of honoring them as well — don't do that without getting in there.

[Russell:] Right.

[Participant 6:] If I get in there with them, I know that's not any good. If I don't get in there, I don't know how to be merged with them without joining in.

I just recently listened to your interviews, that you'd done a while ago on the radio.

[Russell:] Oh, yeah.

[Participant 6:] And the second one, you talked about the woman worshiping. There was something about that that was like, okay, Russell's not needing me to love these feelings until they feel loved. He doesn't need me to do that. I can. Sometimes that's just right.

Hated. Needed. And if I'm not responsible for doing it all right, and having it all work out, and understanding it all so I can help everybody — it is possible for me to —

I've always known it's possible to choose joy. But how, when I get into really feeling bogged down with all this stuff? Yes, I know it's possible. How?

And just recently, it's not like someone said, or an interior voice said, well, this is how. It just happens.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 6:] It happens in those moments when I can say, okay, and that's enough, and it's all okay.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 6:] The marimba, if that's what I wanted to do. I don't have to put my nose to the grindstone and make sure everything's all right, and then it'll be.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 6:] I can just say, okay, enough.

[Russell:] Yes.

[Participant 6:] And I'm gonna go read a book, I'm gonna take a walk, I'm gonna make a plan, something like that.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 6:] But it's more than just the doing something.

[Russell:] Yes.

[Participant 6:] It's the internal energy. I don't have to do anything. It's just the internal energy that life is joyful.

[Russell:] Yes.

[Participant 6:] That life is wonderful.

[Russell:] Yes.

[Participant 6:] And I can not do anything about it. I can allow that experience to be living in me. The words are hard to say. I've always had the consciousness of that, and I've worked at doing it, and it's not that I've been depressed my whole life. But there is that place where it's always just a little fight to have the light, just have the light, just have the voice to see.

That's growing in me in ways that — it feels like a whole new world.

[Russell:] Oh, bless you. Thank you.

There are so many important invitations in what you're saying. This joy of living. We don't need to be so fixing of everything. At times it's really great to bring attention to some place that's living in there, but it's not a job that we have to do. Just acknowledging something, and then living into the life energy that's there.

That's so very important for all of us, because most of us in the room, whether in the foreground or the background, come out of at least somewhat of a therapeutic culture. And in that culture, there's always something to work on, and there's always something to make better. It's kind of like, then when you're on your deathbed, you can say, "Now I can live!"

What's wrong with this picture?

The living is there all the way through. That's what I hear. And to affirm that in our experience.

And as you said so eloquently, it's right there. We all know how easy it is, at times, to get completely disconnected from that and feel like we're a project to be fixed. But to affirm that is really, really important.

I was on the phone with Gene, Wednesday, and you're reminding me of this beautiful moment. We were taking turns being with each other in a listening kind of way, and he was feeling a certain kind of joy from what I was sharing with him.

Later, when we were talking about it, I was saying how important it is to me that this learning to be in touch with our inner life is not co-opted by therapy.

And he said, oh yeah, yeah, say more, say more.

So I was saying, you see that in the Feldenkrais world, you see that in focusing, you see that even in Western meditation, that it's about fixing, and all this.

And you've heard me use this example before. What I said to him was, imagine if you loved Beethoven. And your heart soared with Beethoven, and you felt connected to the highest and deepest experiences with Beethoven. And then they discovered Beethoven was good for stress reduction, and somebody told you the purpose of Beethoven is stress reduction.

And you'd go, no. It's good. I'm happy that it also does some of that. But that's not what it's for.

And he said, I've been trying to respond to a paper that someone submitted to me, and that's just what I want to tell them. The point being that it's not about fixing ourselves. It's about returning to living experience.

And if we don't put it into the old bottles — and the old bottles are full of therapeutic thinking — it's not that that's bad. It's just that it's limited.

The picture I have is the emphasis I place in the work. I'm all for dealing with difficulty. I'm not into avoiding difficulty. But the emphasis I place, if we think of it in terms of a medical model, is growing the immune system. Getting really healthy. Getting the joy, the appreciation, the gratitude, the feeling of being blessed, getting all that to its highest level.

You're living from that, and from that you can deal with the difficulties that arise. But it's not focusing through the difficulties, staying with the difficulties, waiting for the living. That's more of an allopathic model. Take the antibiotics, get this, and hope that you end up healthy.

Let's grow that healthy livingness. And sometimes you do need this kind of shot or that kind of thing, but you've got a healthy system that's taking all that.

And what's remarkable is we can grow that. It's there, and it's waiting to be watered. So that's so precious, what you're experiencing.

The edge

[Russell:] No, keep going. Oh yeah, go ahead.

[Participant 7:] I had a dream last night that I only remember the first part of. More of it earlier, but it faded before I went down. You and us, and maybe even more beings, I think in this room. And it was this beautiful experience. Everyone was playing music, musical instruments. I'm not a musician, but I particularly remember a moment of you, Participant 14, with the violin.

And it was like you were conducting this beautiful music, and inviting us to this edge — getting those truth bumps — of really staying grounded, and noticing when her heels would leave the ground, because it was like this crescendo, this beautiful music, and can you have it? And we were all really enjoying being right in that, invited to that edge. It felt really good.

So there's something that wants to come. That's part of the edge. I have this image of an edge of not losing the ground, while letting something bigger come through.

I'm gonna wait.

[Russell:] Let something bigger come through.

[Participant 7:] That's actually great to pause, because something new just came. It's about the beautiful way that you've said human transformation involves movement from fear to love as the basic operating principle.

When I first heard that, I thought, oh, that's nice. Kind of sweet. And that is so alive for me, and so deep for me right now, in the physiology of it.

I've read it a few times, and maybe we can find a way to post it to the board. The article you wrote in a 2006 Feldenkrais journal about that.

[Russell:] Oh, yeah. Do we have that article still?

[Participant 7:] Yeah, that's a good one.

[Russell:] Yeah. I got a bunch of writings. We should get that one out.

[Participant 7:] How do you embody it? How to notice the embodiment of fear, how to notice when I'm embodying it. And what we've worked with is so useful, for me personally. And to see it, in a very beginning way, with hesitancy, until you came and gave me a little nudge in April, to share it with a little less hesitancy — using the best words — with my clients, and people who come to our classes.

It's so not hard. One of my clients, who was here at the last weekend retreat, was texting me.

[Russell:] Oh yeah. Oh great. She's going to do the next mentorship, right?

[Participant 7:] And she was, this shit works. Don't make believe. I was like, it was not that hard. I just feel like I've been given alchemy. People have been doing this forever, and oh my god, we know how to do it. It's not so secret or dramatic.

[Russell:] Yeah. Oh, that's good.

[Participant 7:] And can I share something?

[Russell:] Oh, keep going.

[Participant 7:] When I was sitting last night, and my partner and I were talking a little before we went to bed about what is here. What's a growth edge?

I think the last time we explored this, I was sharing that it's been a real edge for me, around allowing my happiness to be as much as it is. And I've grown in that a lot. I feel the move from fear to love, and I'm a lot more okay with having the goodness of my experience.

And now there's something that comes again. Participant 2, in Istanbul. And Participant 2, what you shared has been with me, even since we talked about it for two minutes when we arrived yesterday, about your friend.

And I've been working a little with a client who has ALS. I go to her home, just a few blocks from here. A few friends have said, you need to work with her. I see her family picture on the dresser, and in such a short time she's gone from a normal functional person to now she can a little bit move her hands to drive her chair, and she can chew and speak, and she can't even hold her head up.

And how to let that in, along with, in the gratitude review, my legs take my weight. Wow, that's a blessing. It's so easy to overlook.

So what I want to say about this edge is growing my immune system, or my willingness to have joy, enough that — I actually posted on the board, on our lunch break, in response to the thread about Istanbul.

Ever since Mesa was born, really — I used to listen to NPR more, and I don't want that on. I don't want him having that in his consciousness. Some big news happens, I'll hear about it through the grapevine, but I've kind of let myself be in my own world.

And the line that comes to me, with no offense — one of my Tibetan teachers used to talk about California Buddhism. It's all about feeling good, and me having my good. But there's an edge for me. I really want to not make it about therapy, or fixing myself, or just me and my happy life, but how to include this woman with ALS. And yet that touched my heart.

That love, the fear to love, doesn't have an opposite. I have some kind of underground knowing that that kind of love isn't actually disturbed. I don't know if that's exactly the word. In hearing you share, I was having tears, and somehow it's not like swinging into it, like what Participant 6 said about joining.

I don't know if I'm being clear. There's an edge I want to grow. I've been growing the positivity side, and I want to make sure I'm not excluding the challenging parts of life, even if they're not so personally here for me.

[Russell:] Yeah.

Meeting what is

[Russell:] There was a piece in that last part that I'd like to comment on. It was coming up with others here as well.

What happens when we meet challenging or painful moments without adding the stories about it? It's bad, it's terrible, it shouldn't be. But what happens when our heart meets that heart?

There's the possibility of excluding. There's the possibility of falling into the cultural story, or a lesson of a family, or whatever the situation is. But is there another way? And we're exploring another way of being with living.

That's all I want to say right now.

I mean, you looked in her eyes, and you saw the ocean. I have a great sense that she saw the ocean looking back at her. And I can't imagine — just like the hug with the boy — a greater gift than a moment like that. Not advice, but real meeting. Body to body. Whole person to whole person.

[Participant 8:] Right. And she's a healer. She's healing, but it's healing in your suffering.

[Russell:] Oh, thank you. It's an amazing image.

[Participant 9:] Just to add to that. It also reminded me of being with my mother when she was dying. To me it felt very much about me, anyway, but it's about just being fully present to how that person is. And they know you're fully present to how they are. That's who you want to relate to. You want to meet them where they're at right now, and they know that.

[Participant 10:] Another comment, something I've been wondering. When Participant 7 talks about her client with ALS, I thought of my cousin, who's pretty much lost the ability to walk, although her mind is quite alert. How, under those circumstances, do you access the body's wisdom? This is something I've been asking.

[Russell:] I want to tell you a brief story. Maybe I've said it before. The first quadriplegic.

[Participant 10:] Not the one on the bicycle.

[Russell:] No. Not the one where a wheel came off.

[Participant 10:] Oh no, that's the blind guy.

[Russell:] That was Bruno. No, this is — I think I've told you this already, haven't I?

[Participant 10:] Huh?

[Russell:] Back when I was a very young practitioner, I had moved to Philadelphia and had a practice. What was I, like 26? It must have been the fifth or sixth month of my practice. A woman I was seeing as a client, a psychologist, a psychotherapist, called me and said that a friend she was in practice with was a young, really brilliant psychotherapist. He was about 30, two kids.

He was driving down the Pennsylvania Turnpike to buy his wife a birthday present, a Mustang, and a wheel came off a truck, and he was a quadriplegic. And that's how I met Dan.

There's lots of things I learned from Dan. But one of the things that's relevant here is that there was still access for him. He couldn't feel below here, but the head that he could feel was not just for thinking. He still had access to his intuition, to his feeling. And this is body at a different level. He could feel when he was going to shit in his bag, and he could feel that in his temples. It was very important for him, that he could excuse himself so the sounds wouldn't be there. A very important moment in our work together.

And from there I really got interested. What else can you feel, when you're with clients? So we did this investigation. With him it was like relocating where his intuition was coming from. But it was there. It was still body, but different.

I don't know exactly how that relates, but it's a similar situation.

What I want to say is that even when this is cut off, there are parts of this brain that are still processing what neurologists colloquially call our reptilian relationship to life, and our mammalian relationship to life. We can still have access to these. So I understand that as still available, but it's gonna feel different. It's gonna need some training. And if somebody's had something in their past, like he had — a reference — that's helpful.

[Participant 11:] Some of the clients I work with are virtually almost 95 percent dissociated, because of high trauma. You can embody dissociation. You can locate yourself emotionally, almost physically — a physical sensation in that dissociation. Because that's where the energy goes, but that's the life force. They're not living here. They can't. It's not safe to live here. But you can almost transfer to a dissociated state, because you have to.

[Russell:] Interesting. Thank you. I want to come back to hearing from people here.

I'm so moved by all these examples of living. ALS, Dan, the dissociation, what's living in the room. And Participant 7's question — how to live with all this. With the ground state of joy that's there when we are in touch. It doesn't necessarily mean it's a happy moment, but there's something living in there. It's alive.

And it's not cold. It's warm.

Someone like to speak? Yes.

Coming alive

[Participant 12:] Over the last six months, it feels like a whole life has taken place for me. A lot of events, a lot of things that have happened. Sitting here and listening to everyone, I'm thinking of all the things that have happened, and wow, there's no way I have time to check in with everything that's alive for me right now.

But the things that feel most relevant, that I do want to share — one of the things I've really taken to heart in this program, one of many, is the invitation you gave us. To hold an intention of something we would like to step into within the three years that we're together. Something that might bring up challenge, insecurity, things you might be able to really get your hands in and work with.

After sitting with that question for months, three things came up, and there's still more that wants to come alive. Two of the three have become very much alive for me in the last six months.

One of those — some of you know, those of you who are my friends — I really felt called. I sat with it, and it came through as a message I felt drawn to. Becoming a father while being in this group. And my partner is now pregnant. November 18th is our due date.

There's a lot of stuff there, and there's also a lot of not-stuff there. What I mean is, someone said, are you so excited? And yes, there is a part of me that's excited, and yet it hasn't changed my day-to-day life yet. Nothing's changed yet. There's a part of me that almost feels other people are sometimes more excited. So I feel like I have to be something more exciting. And I am excited. But it's not real yet, in some sense.

So that's one of the things.

Another thing that came up, that I sat with, was the idea of starting a small business, and using the tools and the practices of feeling into the process. Starting and launching, and then interacting with clients, and marketing and networking, and all of that.

This weekend, actually, is the launch of a small business that Participant 2 and I have been working on for about a year and a half. So we're super excited about that. I'm excited about the possibilities it has of bringing up stuff. As an owner of a business, all the time and money and intention and detail that's gone into this — in some ways it feels more like a baby that's being born than my actual baby.

[Russell:] It's being born sooner.

[Participant 12:] Exactly.

It really does feel great. When my partner first told me she was pregnant — we found out together, but when I first became aware that it was a reality — she said, are you excited? And I said, no, but my friends are.

I told her, yeah, I'm very excited, and there's this other part of me that says, could have waited another two years. And then I told her, when I look into that part of me, that part of me two years from now would have said, could have waited another two years.

So I'm just really grateful to be with all the things that have come up over the last six months. It's kind of magical, how the work doesn't intellectually live in my mind every moment, or even every day, but the experience — the rippling effect of focusing, of being with everyone here — has tremendously transformed my life.

And I'm resonating with what Participant 7 was saying, about feeling very odd at how good life is.

Within the awe is ecstasy, and bliss, and how can it be? How can it be this good?

So there's a lot of stuff there. And the third thing, which part of me doesn't want to mention, because then I feel like I'm being held accountable, is learning Chinese. Which I've attempted a few times. Tīng bu dǒng, which means I don't know.

[Russell:] That's a good thing, though. You have to teach me that. You're gonna write that one up there.

[Participant 12:] It brings up a lot for me. A lot of potential learning, a lot of insecurity, and a lot of I'm a slow learner, and not any good at this, and just brick walls. Confusion.

[Russell:] Thank you.

[Participant 13:] I had the delight of being with Participant 12 and his partner in Chicago a couple of months ago. Not even — a month and a half. She's radiant. Very happy.

The house

[Participant 14:] So over the past five years, I've been building a house. And I'm aware in this moment that I've been building a house here. Because I've been working with you a long time.

[Russell:] Was it Brighton Bush?

[Participant 14:] I just decided to blurt it out, because I just want to share, and put myself on, and experience that right now.

I was so excited to come here. I sort of burst out of the car to the airplane. I said, "Bye!" And it was really challenging to leave. I'm so excited to be in all of your presence.

And I shared with you in our meeting that on the airplane, I noticed how embodied I was, and it was just, oh, wow. It's so much. It's almost like too much. There's too much in every moment, and I want to slow down, and breathe.

Just the little things. Nobody's sitting next to me. Wow, I have the whole two seats. Nobody else does. Just to think of that small little thing. And then I have this sandwich, and the man across from me has the same sandwich, and he's this beautiful Black man. And I'm eating my sandwich. I'm just eating the inside of it so my fingers are relaxed. And I'm thinking, I don't have a napkin. Okay, well, I'll ask him if he has a napkin. And he said, no, I don't have a napkin either. And the man sitting next to him said, oh, I have paper towels.

And it just is this embodiment of taking it all in, and feeling blessed by every bit of it.

And why that makes me sad — or it's not sad, it's a happiness. What's been with me is, I'm noticing so much more. And again, sometimes that's overwhelming. Just get out of my head.

The house that we're building requires me to be on with a lot of people. And I use that term on, because that's kind of what I haven't gotten comfortable with. Because there's too much of it. It's just constant, coming at me. It's with me at night, and in the morning, and on the weekends. It's just too much.

And so when I come here, it slowly drops. And I'm completely reminded of what I'm doing. And it's a very beautiful house. But I don't want to be burned out. And I almost feel that way. In moments. Right now I do.

I love it so much.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Silence 39 seconds]

[Participant 14:] Thank you very much.

[Russell:] Thank you.

For those who don't know, I got to see the house. It was in Bend. It's called the LBC, the Living Building Challenge, and they're the first residents in the country trying to do this — in the world, trying to do this. It's a set of criteria where everything, not only ecology the way you think of it, but even every company you deal with has to be ethical with their employees. You can't buy a nail unless it comes from the right place, and it can't be shipped too far, because of how much energy it takes to ship things.

Disposing of the old property — everything can't go to landfill. It has to be recycled. They actually weigh how much you put into landfill. It has to be a certain percentage to qualify. And you have to take all your grey water and your black water and work with it on the property. And you're

producing your own power. It has to be net neutral in power, neutral in water use, in the high desert.

So the criteria are extraordinary, what they're trying to do, as an example of being conscious of the environment. It goes on and on. I'm just giving you a few highlights. If you want to sit down with her sometime — no. Look on the website. You can see the very elaborate criteria for what it means to do that.

And I was very taken with the commitment that she and her partner have, for modeling this. Not that everybody could do it, but as a way of being in the environment that recognizes the rippling, and the interconnection to everything. I was very, very moved.

So when she's saying she's building a house, it takes on another dimension, when you get the level of decision about every piece. They had to make their own plaster, right? Because to ship the plaster in, it was going to travel too far. So they had to use local materials and create it. They could get limestone, they get this, and every single thing has many repercussions. And when you start seeing the world like that. Step by step.

And the other thing I want to say, from what you said about how to stand it — so much good. The way you're feeling so much more in the interactions. Participant 7 was pointing to this, and Participant 12 was pointing to this. There really is a kind of preparation of the body, to allow as much as we are capable of allowing.

As shamans know, and as mystics know, there are experiences that can fry your nervous system if your nervous system hasn't been prepared. It's like taking 220 voltage in a 110 line. You got to grow your lines, to be able to allow this much interconnectivity, this much love, this much joy, this much connection to life, this much experiencing of these continuous blessings. To be available, to be permeable, and not walled off to that. It's preparation.

Working with our movement lessons is actually part of that preparation. More space, more capacity, more breath, less contraction, so that more can move through here.

Learning to sit with more. Every time you're sitting with a challenging state of mind and you're able to stay with it, you're growing capacity, bit by bit, to have more moving through you.

And then the presence that you can bring to a situation becomes your gift, your donation to that event. You don't get blown out in an unhealthy way by it, because you're practicing. You're cultivating.

In other traditions they would talk about cultivating the other bodies, and it's like that. It's like you're growing your body out from you. This body.

Only mind. The body-mind. In this context, there's no mind, and there's no body. It's one thing. I'm using the term body. I could be saying the embodied mind. I could be saying our capacity for experiencing living, moving through here.

And that living — the traditional words of mind, body, emotion, feeling — no longer describe the territory, so we need new vocabulary. It's living, moving through. And it's actually even beyond the boundaries of the physical body. But there's still a location in which it's occurring. It includes the physical body, but is not bound to the physical body.

Moving through

[Participant 15:] I think that capacity — the key, what you just said, was moving through. At least for me, there's a storage capacity, and that doesn't serve the through. So those are aspects of practice that I need, because I do work in this field, and many of you have mentioned that area of depth and diving. It's life-giving work.

I know my kids always thought I was pretty weird. But if you live on the edge of death and life, those are the biggest things we do. Be born, and die. And then all the little deaths and births throughout the body. So wonderful a practice for the time that we do leave. But it's the storage that often interferes with our capacity to be present.

[Russell:] Yes. Can you expand just a little on that concept of the storage?

[Participant 15:] For me, being close to essences of life, grief, involved in death — there is a sense of receiving these incredible gifts of people, and the exchange that I have. But I really didn't know how to let them go, either. There were important practices of letting it move through. Receiving, being with, and then letting it go.

And so then your body gets used. Not used up. It just gets full. I bought my house, and it just got too crowded, and I didn't even know it. I had an experience where I called an older mentor friend of mine, and we sat out a day like today, and I just sat and cried, and all these tears came. Thank goodness my body knew what to do. Something else could have happened. I could have gotten really sick. But it was such a shock and a surprise.

I saw it. I didn't always know then how to support a better receiving and releasing, so I'm still working on that. Probably fifteen, twenty years ago.

[Russell:] Yeah. Does that help?

[Participant 15:] Great, yeah.

Spirit

[Russell:] Yes, we do.

[Participant 16:] Well, I've had similar feelings myself. Journaling around it, too. Not that there's clarity here, but after hearing mind, body, one of the concepts that's been expanded for me — and home, and new vocabulary.

I've recently — thank you, Participant 7 — done a reading. John O'Donohue. And it has been perfect timing, of things you've been talking about more so this session.

For any of you who don't know him, I didn't. He was a poet, philosopher, priest. Very traditional, coming from a traditional Irish background, even within Ireland, and writing about the ancient Celtic connection with the earth.

I'm only midway in Anam Cara, which is spiritual friend, as opposed to solely friend, and it has that different, deeper connotation.

And so the mind-body, for me — I've been very focused. A word that resonated with me when you spoke, Participant 5. Because I'm so interested in this neuroplasticity, and the very concrete

knowledge that's coming out, that's moving the work. Not just our work, but all of these traditions. That we can actually change our minds, our brains.

And then, reading his book, spirit. It has been coming into the equation for me. And I realized, okay, this center — we had a conference call and I was talking about building my house, and how I can start to know where the front door is and the back door is. It's still a little rickety. A lot rickety. But it's got a good strong foundation now.

And reading the very grounding words. Literally earth. He uses the word clay, talks about that conceptually. And that has broadened my whole concept. For me, it felt like something was missing. And now I'm starting to feel that. He talks very specifically. The spirit is not inside. It's bigger. And that spaciousness, that I'm starting to feel in the last year, really took shape for me. It's somewhat endless, and yet I kind of feel like it's right out here. I can sense it. So that's been going on.

And then, from a very concrete aspect, the scientific, which has been the interest. I saw an article in that Buddhist magazine, Tricycle, recently, and I'm so excited. I haven't gotten the book, because I was in Greece when I read the article. But this scientist from England is sort of turning the idea of the scientific paradigm that we've been accepting — that science is objective.

And therefore all these modalities, the benefits and the outcomes of the practices that we do, since we can't measure them, maybe it's woo-woo. And he's starting to say, well, maybe science isn't objective. And then he's bringing in the kinds of practices that we're doing, and saying we need to come up with a new paradigm around science.

This is my quick interpretation. I haven't gotten the book yet. But the upshot, for me, is that I don't have a PhD in science, and I feel like a door has opened. The work that we're doing, and the ability to take it and maybe go in a direction I've been interested in. Maybe there is going to be a way that I can have credibility without having the PhD in neuroscience. And that's just exciting. One more door that opened, that I totally would not have expected.

And it's not that the physical opened that door. It was the air. But I'm just seeing another dimension that I didn't think of.

[Russell:] So am I getting it right? What's really passionate for you right now is a connecting of this spirit world and this embodied world that you're working with, that also connects to this side of you that has wanted a kind of validation. Something that lives, traditionally, in the world of science in our culture. An acceptance. That they could all live together. Your spirit, your bodily practices, and this part of you that loves science and wants to be in that realm — yet not the way it used to be, or the way it often is. Something like that?

[Participant 16:] Yeah. Not combining them all, but that there really are two separate things. I think that was why I was asking, how am I approaching this? There are two separate excitements.

The spiritual has been very much an embodied feeling. A concept I didn't have in my sensing vocabulary before. I didn't know to sense my spirit. Even though I know it's been there, it's supported me, it is me. But that knowing was so under the radar. Now it's sort of out there. It's very vivid.

[Russell:] Very vivid.

[Participant 16:] The other part is, oh, cool. There is this. There's been a real desire for me not to pigeonhole myself. Like, maybe professionally, where am I going to take this? And it's not anxiety, but there's an underlying anxiety. I really should be doing something. And who's going to take me seriously?

[Russell:] I got it. Maybe that's right there. That part that really wants to be taken seriously. And I'm guessing even that part of yourself that appreciates the validation, or that way of knowing. That somehow this experience of your spirit, that feels so important and so real, right now feels like another world, coming out into the world, being taken seriously, finding a way of bringing this forward.

[Participant 16:] Yeah. But somehow —

[Russell:] That's just right.

[Participant 16:] Yeah.

[Russell:] It's not that concrete. But just feel it. There. There it is. There it is, right there.

[Participant 16:] Yes. Thank you.

Pause

[Russell:] Okay, let's take a little pause. What I'd like to do is have a little pause, do some movement together, ground ourselves in our body, and I think have a little time before dinner. Maybe the last people can speak, or if need be, we'll go into the evening as well.

Okay, so let's take a little pause. It's kinda hot in here, so we need some fresh air.