Practice

Angela 2 — Week 4, Day 4, Session 6 — 35 minutes

Summary: A check-in in words or gesture opens the session. One word, acture, leads into Feldenkrais's distinction between posture and acture, and health as blossoming within circumstance. Russell then guides a resource process, inviting an image of someone in whose presence one felt safe or affirmed, and sets up a partner practice.

Check-in

[Russell:] What I'd like to do first is have a very brief check-in. It can be a few words, could be a gesture. Just kinda check in, kinda like taking a sense of the weather, how the weather is in there.

You can have it in weather language if you want. Kinda warm with a mild breeze. Threatening storm.

So, just a few words or a gesture or a way. Let's just go around. See what comes.

[Participant:] Fresh.

[Participant:] Pure.

[Participant:] Midway through the tree.

[Participant:] Almost too full.

[Russell:] Almost too full.

[Participant:] Even a new word and an image: acture.

[Russell:] Acture?

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant:] Acture. It's a Feldenkrais term, acture. He invented it. Do you want to explain it?

Acture

[Russell:] So Feldenkrais had an important insight about the limits of the idea of posture. He's saying posture is based in the word post, to be posted.

And the human being, if you look at the human being structure with such a small base and larger upper body, is designed for movement. Clearly, it's designed to move. So to find good posture is imposing on the human being too much limitation. We need something that's more connected to movement.

So he said action, acture. He invented the word acture. And his criteria of what was good acture is really interesting. It's based in the world of judo, which was the ability to move in any direction without having to prepare yourself to move, without what he called a prior reorganization.

And so acture is, you're going along and you need a new direction. Whether it's in thought or in movement and behavior in our lives, it's that image that, for the human being, adaptability is such a key feature in our living.

Now, if we look at the whole evolutionary process, he would look back on evolution and say, it's really our ability to adapt. And then he would go, he said, look at human beings. We could live at the North Pole. We could live at the equator. He said, human beings and cockroaches. He'd always like to throw something in there.

But that sense of — one of his two primary definitions of health. He always thought uniquely about everything. It had nothing to do — we'd all talk about blood pressure and cholesterol. He'd go, no, none of that. He'd go, what is the shock that the organism can take and recover its good functioning? Recover its life, recover its connecting and its joy.

Well, this gets to be a long answer, doesn't it?

So, after we graduated the training, we had a post-training meeting in San Francisco, and we had all these people from the San Francisco area coming in for FI lessons, for table lessons. People from the ballet who were hurt, and some athletes from Berkeley who were very healthy, and just 70, 80 different people coming in for lessons. Actually probably more than that over the three days.

And then he asked us the last day, he goes, so, who was the healthiest person that we saw? And he would do little interviews with some of the people, public interviews, then assign them to somebody to work with.

So somebody said, well, that lead ballerina, she might have hurt her ankle, but did you see the way she had such a beautiful carriage? And he loved a different listening style.

Then someone else would talk about a person who was an athlete and recovered from some knee injury, and now they were functioning well. No, no, no.

Did you see the hunchback?

And we go, oh, you mean — do you remember me talking to him? He was like this, but did you see the light in his eyes? And he would go, did you see?

This was a man who had the scoliosis and this kyphosis, and he looks at you like this, but did you notice how he talked about his children and his wife, and how they went to the symphony each week, and how he wouldn't miss the Sunday dinner, and how he loved being a principal, and he'd been a principal for 27 years, and he never missed a day, and he loved that. That is a healthy person.

And we were all looking at the body. He's like, this is a person who dealt with difficulty in their life. Couldn't play the games that the other kids played, dealt with ridicule, dealt with —

You take Feldenkrais's life experience, dealing with a lot of people who'd gone through the Holocaust, a lot of people who'd been in prison camps. His criteria for who was healthy, and who

blossomed — the Viktor Frankl stories of who blossomed in these prison camps, who not only survived, but came through it with an inspiration toward giving more to life.

And for myself, my heroes. Often when I go in and do a process — not like the spiritual benefactor we did, but this — I've been doing workshops lately. I don't think I did this when I was down doing the dignity and grace in Salt Lake City, but when I've been leading this workshop in dignity and grace, how the embodied life works with that.

One of the processes I do is I ask people to come up with examples. Did I do that? And we resource on that. But anyway, so I developed a resource process. And I realized one of the prime examples for me are these beings like Nelson Mandela.

And you hear the story of 27 years in this prison. And the problem that the authorities had, because the prison guards would like him so much, they would bring him extra food, and they wouldn't work him hard enough. Because he was so kind and caring, and he had his dignity and his way of being in his situation, that the whole front row of his inauguration was filled with prison guards who came to his inauguration.

Because of the influence that he had on them by how he was living in his life circumstance. That, for me, is such a model of health. Where we take our life circumstance and we somehow blossom within that.

So, acture on one level has to do with our physical — being able to maximize our physical capacity. If we're in a wheelchair, to maximize that. To be able to move within the restrictions that we have, how to maximize our capacity to move.

But on a living level, it has to do with, can I keep my choices open? Can I keep my life with possibility? Even with — whether they're genetic limitations or limitations from upbringing or whatever — even within these circumstances.

So thank you for asking.

Around the room

[Participant:] I think I'm going to use a cooking term. Gently stirring.

[Russell:] Gently stirring.

[Participant:] Two of them just came to mind, because the first one was light. The second one was bright. And then I put them together, and I think that image of the childhood life — what's the Lite-Brite game? I'm feeling connected in all things.

[Participant:] Mine's a bit more topographical. Those are the things, right? So I do feel pretty gently undulating.

[Silence 33 seconds]

[Participant:] Oh.

[Participant:] Mellow. As in mellow yellow.

[Participant:] It started from two days ago. That cold water, and a lot of — I felt it. I would say mostly settled.

[Russell:] Mostly settled.

[Participant:] When we started this go-around, I was feeling like if you're out on the lake in a little boat and a bigger boat goes by, and all of a sudden you're like this. And as we went around and —

[Participant:] I was thinking originally, satisfied, but thirsty. And also, I've been looking at these beautiful trees. I keep feeling a sense of flight, and really enjoying, but my roots feel loose. And so it's kind of like —

[Russell:] Yeah. That was the expression, yeah? Carefree.

[Participant:] Carefree. Sounds like a surprise to me too. It wasn't — I didn't predict it. That old carefree, heady.

[Participant:] Cruising straight and level. Occasional headwind. Slight tailwinds.

[Silence 45 seconds]

[Participant:] Eager to go to places that I don't know about.

[Russell:] I missed it, I'm sorry. I had my eyes closed for a moment.

[Participant:] Oh. Thank you.

[Participant:] I'm the same as Barbara. I think cooking resonates, and I'm thinking simmering.

[Participant:] The one that came was touching bubbles.

[Russell:] What's it again?

[Participant:] Now it wants to keep going. Oh, there. There.

[Russell:] Thank you.

Resource process

[Russell:] So, I'd like to say a few words about the resource process.

We're going to invite our inner life. You might have somebody in mind already after watching my process, but I encourage you to be open to something fresh, and it's fine if it's what you've already thought of.

See, one of the things I love about these processes is to surprise the cortex, to surprise the conscious mind. 'Cause some of us, we have maybe certain people we think of, or some of us might have the sense that, well, I haven't really gotten that kind of support or that kind of listening.

And it's my belief, and I don't ask you to have the same belief, but just to hold it as a possibility, that your life has been sustained by certain, at least, moments of interaction. And that perhaps whether it's been a second grade teacher, whether it's been somebody along the way who somehow gave you an affirmation, a positive sense, a yes.

And maybe they didn't even do that very often, but you had that and your body resonated with it. And even if it's not conscious right now, we're gonna see if that's in there somehow.

Could be a therapist that really listened. It doesn't matter how — the overall of the person, or the overall of even the relationship. Although if it's somebody who you had a basic comfortability

with, that's wonderful. But even if it was moments of, I'm safe here. I feel seen or affirmed here. You can work off of that.

But again, this is not so much generated by your thinking mind. It's inviting something deeper to surprise you. And let it come. And there's no pressure to find a big one. It can be subtle.

But we're looking for a sense of safety, a sense of — I want to say affirmation. There's some feeling of being seen.

So close your eyes, see what happens.

Really just allow the possibility, something coming that you don't know, and then you'll see what comes.

And please settle onto your seat. And I know it's tempting to try to think it out right now, but just really trust that something comes. Trust the process.

So you feel you're on your seat here, so you drop down. Drop down. Feel your feet. Feel your bottom. You sense your hands.

As you feel the support of whatever you're on, really feel that support. You're being supported by the ground, by your cushion, by your chair.

And can then bring the attention into the inner body, inside there, into your throat, into your chest, down into your belly.

And invite your inner life to bring forth an image of some being who, at least at times in their presence, you felt safe, seen, or affirmed.

It could be very recent. Doesn't have to be an authority of any sort. It could be a student of yours. It could be some situation in which you could feel, I'm safe here. And in the presence of, at least at these moments, there's a kind of yes inside, or affirmation. A feeling of wholeness, something in that direction.

This is a being who, in their presence at this time, you have felt, I can feel my fullness, presence, however you want to think of that. Just let the image come.

When you have a being, cultivate a moment.

No being — if you can't find, if nothing comes, you can open to the animal world as well. Could be that a benefactor came in a four-legged form. But just take whichever comes for you, and really let yourself have a sensory-rich moment. A time. Something that either was or could have been. A place. Let it be a location.

If you're in a room, see the furniture, or sense the space that you're in. If you're outside, or walking, or something, feel the environment.

Keep letting it come. And as you're in the space, seeing, hearing, smelling, getting the aura, seeing their face or their body, listen to how it feels to be you in a moment like this. How it feels in your chest, in your belly, in your whole sense of yourself. How that resonates for you.

It's almost like you're listening to this being inside. It can surprise you how it feels, how it takes this kind of moment, how it lives into this kind of moment, and how it expresses or embodies the sense of safety, wholeness, presence, affirmation.

So you're kind of going back and forth between seeing them or sensing them, and sensing yourself in response, inviting your body, your inner life, to resonate.

And we're going to stay with this. I'm gonna guide you out from here, and you'll be going back in with a partner shortly. So just let your inner life know that it will have time to get to know this better, that there's no pressure or demands. It's an invitation to kind of bathe in this air.

And if it's difficult to contact, you'll have more time. If you're already in contact, you'll get to cultivate it further in the presence of another, and it's likely to grow and develop in the presence of another.

So, just thank your inner life that all this is in there.

Feel how sensation, thought, and feeling can interact with memory.

There might be a kind of feeling of gratitude, or a feeling of touchedness that lingers. Enjoy that.

And we'll guide ourselves back to, I'm sitting here on this spot. Can hear the sounds around me.

Keep your eyes open.

With a partner

[Russell:] We're gonna be with a partner, and we'll see. I encourage you to use the same image, unless another one just comes in and it kinda demands your company. But I encourage you to use the same image, and some of it will be already known, but it's likely to go through shifts in the presence of the other.

And as you go with it, as you're with it and you're talking in present tense language, it changes when you talk out loud in present tense language. First, describing where you are. Really stay with that present tense. I'm walking. Not even the more passive, I see myself walking down. I'm walking down the path.

So really bring yourself in language that it's happening now. It's very helpful for the centers we're working with.

And give yourself — let it surprise you. Maybe something will appear that you didn't see before. It's fresh and it's coming and you're describing. Maybe what they're wearing all of a sudden appears. You're just describing what it is, and from that presencing, your body has a response, and you're listening to that.

Now, the partner, at first, you're really just listening. As it gets clear, there are some sensing and feeling words that are important, that the person's describing. If there's a pause and it feels right, you might say back something like, so you're sensing a real openness in your chest. And when you hear that back, feel it, and see, is that right? Do I want that changed in any way? And if not, just let their words resonate in your body, so you get it in another way.

And if you have any gestures coming, let the gestures come.

I'll guide you through the process, and towards the end, I'm also going to invite you to listen for the most important or key sensations, feeling words, and gesture, so that you kind of encapsulate it.

Okay? Any questions?

Yeah, I'll guide you. And it's good. You're gonna have about ten minutes each. And find a partner.

Yes. Good idea. It's pretty hot in here?

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] Yeah. And I think we have some closed windows as well.