Practice

Angela 2 — Week 4, Day 5, Session 2 — 17 minutes

Summary: Russell describes how years of Feldenkrais work with people in challenging situations taught him to appreciate ordinary capacities — breathing, hearing, standing. Attention, he says, draws the extraordinary out of the background and enriches the living moment. The group then practices breath through the spine and a light partner blessing.

Ordinary capacity

Stand together.

And I've told the story, I think, in different ways a few times, but one of the great, great unexpected gifts of having a Feldenkrais practice over so many years has been all the people who are dealing with very challenging situations.

And I mean, many of my inner heroes are some of the people who, you know, took up their situation and, through their use of attention, transformed physical pain or loss of ability into some kind of blossoming life.

But also the other gift that came so often — and just shift your weight as I'm speaking, so you're feeling yourself here — was being able to appreciate the presence of ordinary capacity.

In other words, when you work with somebody — especially younger people, or somebody my age who could no longer walk — I would come out of those sessions going —

And then, working with people who couldn't breathe well, and what it's like to struggle with each breath. Then the appreciation for breathing.

So then I began to wonder, did I just have that after I was with them? Or could I cultivate appreciation for the ordinary — other times?

And often I find it accessible. Not always, but often. The simple realities of hearing and breathing and standing. And it takes something for me, usually five to ten seconds of giving attention.

Attention is magic. And out of the background of the ordinary comes the extraordinary. Standing, you know. I mean, how thrilled we get when a child who can't stand learns to stand, or a person who's been in a wheelchair can be on their feet. It's thrilling.

And of course, these go into the background of our experience. But that's the magic of attention — you can bring background into foreground.

You know, we all know we can be in a very difficult mental state, and an extraordinary sunset lifts us out for at least some seconds. But what's happened — we think it was the sunset that made that happen, but actually our attention got pulled.

So then the question is, if our attention is accessible to less dramatic phenomena, is it actually possible we can get pulled out of our confusion regularly?

And that's part of this movement of attention, or gaining some mastery of attention, as an invitation for growing our living moments.

So it's not — I used to think of practices like gratitude, or practices like feeling good, as kind of about being a good person or something. But it's really how we can enrich the living moment.

Breath from above

So feel, as you're standing here. Let's go to the practice of letting the breath come from above, through the spine, tracking through yourself, all the way through your pelvis into the earth, and exhaling up and out.

It's not a real detailed image. It's connecting the breathing in as a gift from above, through yourself, feeling the ground for a moment, exhaling up and out.

That exhale — slight invitation to length in the spine.

Arms come up, and track with our hands and arms a gesture of following the breath. Inhaling, pausing for a moment, and exhaling. As if it's a radiance up from the earth to the sky. You bring the breath from the sky to the earth.

Breathe here for a few moments, thinking through the crowns of your fingers and the crown of your head — these eleven crowns, open to the world above. The legs and feet open to the earth below.

Inhaling.

And exhale.

Blessing a partner

To a partner, lightly, as if you're bringing down just your blessings for this person. It's like bringing the goodwill, practiced with a very light touch through their body.

And at first, you'll go through their body like this, and then afterwards come just around them. You don't have to have any beliefs about auras or anything — just shower them with your goodwill. As if there's a shower that you're connecting with, any way you want to imagine that.

But you have your best wishes through your hands and fingers, and this person just receives it. The person just stands there and feels whatever they feel.

So first, find a partner. Touching their body lightly, a number of sweeps, and then just their field, a little bit around their body.

Okay? Find a partner. And I'll tell you when to switch.

It's a light touch. The person being touched, just enjoy the contact. And the person touching, you're imagining bringing, at a minimum, your best wishes, and maybe that connects to something larger also.

Different rhythms. You can stay just in the arms and shoulders if you want for a while. You don't have to sweep your whole body each time.

Letting your body open as much as it's willing. Letting your cells receive the goodwill — the vehicle for at least their own intention, and maybe some —

Move on to the kind of showering them from around their body.

You can, at any time you want, pause and connect to receiving for yourself something from above, so you can radiate it to the other.

Shower of blessing.

We let that in through —

And pause if that feels right timing. A little bit more, you go ahead, but pause and take a few moments to sense both people sensing.

What lives?

Really letting our experience lead. We don't need our concepts about energy or auras or anything. Let the sense of your whole body experience lead you.

Pulsation.

Sense of connection.

Something open.

Bow to your partner.

[Silence 34 seconds]

[Silence 30 seconds]

Around the body

Feel ready. Begin to go to blessing the state around the physical body, bringing blessings from your heart.

And feel validated. Please just pause and listen and feel free.

Pulses, vibration in and around you.

Space around you.

Skin boundaries.

Open.

Hey, let's come into this neighborhood.