Discussion

Angela 2 — Week 4, Day 5, Session 3 — 69 minutes

Summary: A check-in on the morning sitting and the voice of the conditioned self. People share separating from that voice, listening for resource, and a part that does not want to be here. Russell teaches pausing and speaking from experience, guides one person with a protective part, and sets up a partner listening practice.

Opening

[Russell:] Drop down. A body habit we want to develop — the pause and dropping, sensing the ground.

Take a moment to feel, I am here. From I am here, a sense of, how am I? To be able to let the awareness come to always the availability of the here. There's always a feeling tone to the moment.

This encouragement to ground in the body first, especially true when the feeling states are strong, or when the thinking, the drifting mind, is strong also.

Let's take a few moments to reflect back to sitting this morning. Being in the river of your life, and sense that there's open attention and at times directed attention.

This invitation to not only notice the thinking process, but also to shine light on that default voice of the conditioned self — sometimes called substitute self, constructed self — is so very familiar and close. Easy to call that I.

A needed place, a needed part of us. Be able to be with that, noticing when it's creating helpful directions of attention, unhelpful directions.

Ground in the reality, the factualness of this body in this moment. Holding lightly opinions, thoughts, feelings. Not discounting, just not believing them as fundamentally true.

Just reflecting — we have meditation this morning, with some of those images, and last night, a different kind of sitting, where we would hear words about meditation with the intention of taking them in and down. Not just to take them into thought, but really sit with them on the seat, in our heart, as well as in our thought.

There are those, and of course there's open space for other offerings that might want to occur. Questions that might —

Before we go into a new practice, let's check in about how well that's living.

Separation

[Participant 1:] One of the things that was really clear this morning in the sitting — just the sense of physical weight that holding those thoughts as I carries. And with that, stepping back with a

love, like, oh, there's that voice. I just kept feeling this, oh, like my shoulders coming off, and how much a sense of solidity and embodiment comes from the merging of the I with those voices.

[Russell:] Yeah. So important. That sense, and to have that over and over validated as we get that little bit of separation in this warm-heartedness — that little bit where, as you're saying, something gets freed, lighter.

If you're resonating at all with this, this is a very important movement to occur with enough frequency that one, in ordinary moments, can easily separate. And then in the challenging moments, when it gets more magnetized — when the identity gets more magnetized to the interpreter, or the CEO, or the one who thinks they're in charge of life, or whatever we want to call that part — that we have some significant experience to be able to question it in real time, when it's activated.

At first, my experience is not necessarily being able to completely disconnect from it, but to know one is living a falsehood. Falsehood is not quite right, because that makes it almost sound like a judgment of it. A confusion.

And to be willing to endure the exquisite pain of knowing that this is not you and you can't do anything about it.

And to have that 10,000 times, as the strength of the magnet, or the other side of the magnet, lessens. Then the time gap gets shorter and shorter and shorter. Then you start having moments where you can laugh at it pretty quickly.

And then the compassion for the place, 'cause there's a place inside that's hurting in those moments. But the presence, like we feel when we're doing our listening kind of work, is right there.

Boy, that feels like grace for me. Feels like grace.

And then in that way, the intense, difficult situations of our life really are our training ground for, can I have it in this one?

Can I be in this niggly place with Linda, that we've touched on a few thousand times in our relationship, and this time not participate in it? And not participate in it in a wholesome way — not just a pushing-away way, but really feel that I can feel all the ways these gears want to fit into those gears that have kept us together for so long. And I can feel that if I don't go over there, there are these painful moments where we kind of don't know how to structure. And then maybe she's giving a lot of invitations, or I'm giving a lot of invitations to, hey, don't you want to join here again?

It's going to suck, but we'll know it.

That's good. I like it. This is our 10,000.

And then somehow there's just — and it's a little bewildering. It's a little bewildering, because you don't quite know how to be yet. So it's a very innocent feeling, and almost a naked feeling, but bewildering. It's bewildering for the structure in there.

Which is why, hopefully, we've done enough homework that we can be bewildered and grounded. We can be bewildered, and my experience is the disentanglements get faster and faster.

Yeah, go ahead.

With other people

[Participant 2:] Almost all of the people I know don't know that they know this.

[Russell:] Yeah. Right. Nicely said, yes.

[Participant 2:] One, how do I keep my own awareness? Second, is there any way, subtly or implicitly, of suggesting that they have that awareness?

[Russell:] Yeah. It's challenging.

How to have it is everything we're working with. I can't be more specific than really trusting in your bodily process, believing more in your present moment than in your stories. Over and over and over.

Believing more in, I'm sitting here — what we could call the fact of the body — and the supposition of the mind, the supposition of the thinking self. We are normally, especially in a difficult moment, but often at other times, we so believe in what it's saying because we think it's I.

But as we get more separation in easier moments, that can start carrying over, so we can actually question the certainty that it has at those moments. We don't say it's wrong. We don't say it's bad. We just say, maybe. Maybe's a great word. I'm not sure. Seems like.

In terms of working with others, the most important guideline I can give is to direct most of your comments about your experience and not about them. Not about your assessment of them, or what you think about them, or what you think they know or don't know, but in a humble way, talking about your own experience.

And beware of language structures like, I feel like you. I feel like you are really mean. That's not a feeling.

I feel like you really have problems about this. That's not a feeling.

And it even gets more subtle. I feel that you are manipulating me. That's not a feeling. There are lots of feelings in that, but that's a linguistic construction that puts it over there.

So there's a certain innocence and humility and vulnerability in consistently speaking about your own experience.

The guidelines — again, you know that I'm not very system bound — but the guidelines that Marshall Rosenberg came up with in NVC are quite nice. An observation, that there's something you're noticing. Now, this can be about the other person, a behavior. When you didn't call at eight, like you said you would, that's an observation. That didn't happen. That's different than, you never call me.

Be very, very conscious of the use of the terms never, always. Then you're not talking about something that the person can relate to, and it will activate their defense. You will activate not what you're looking for.

Go ahead.

[Participant 2:] I know, I got that part. What I was aiming at more were the people, friends, who want to know what I'm learning.

[Russell:] Great, great. Yes. Oh, so there's an openness there. Okay. That's a different question. Beautiful. So there's an openness there, huh?

It is, but it can get in some ways a lot easier. So let me speak about that.

First of all, it's really helpful if the person is interested, to begin pausing. To model pausing is good in the beginning, it's good in the middle, and it's good at the end. To model pausing, right? Because most of our conversation is gonna happen from up here.

And the moment one person pauses — and pausing is the first dropping down. When I say pausing, I'm implying not just waiting to say what you wanted to say already. It's not like pausing and counting, can I say what I'm gonna tell them?

You know that feeling. I'm gonna be a good listener. I can't wait till I can say what I wanted to say at the beginning.

It's challenging, especially in moments where there's a rub. So we all fall down and get up.

The pause, and I might even say, right now I had a quick response to you, and I realized that for me to really get across what's been most moving for me, I've got to slow down a little bit. You've got a big communication already.

So you're actually describing what your process is, which in some ways feels, well, that's exposing myself, but in another way it's so easy, because you're just staying with what's happening.

I'm pausing right now, and actually I'm doing this weird thing. I'm feeling my bottom in the seat. Because I know if I have more of myself present, I'll be able to connect to you more. And that's one of the most important things I'm learning right now.

And that begins. Then if you want to go further, you've got a real ground state to function from.

And then it's so beautiful, because as you find yourself getting wound up, you go, I can feel it again. I need to pause. And then you're modeling what your intention is.

[Participant 3:] You have an abridged cocktail party answer?

[Russell:] An abridged cocktail — the elevator response, right?

[Participant 3:] Right, right.

[Russell:] When I'm on an airplane, which is not infrequently, and somebody asks me, but they're not really asking — if it's a short flight, if you're not really going to answer, you can say some trite response, 'cause you're not really communicating.

But I do have people who get really interested. I've had, over the years, four flight attendants come to courses, just because of interactions we've had. Two in Europe and two in the US.

There's something about you. We were talking in the back — that you're so kind to us — something touched them in my presence. It was not that I was doing anything extraordinary. On these long flights, you get a lot of interactions. And we're talking about a few thousand flights. It happened to four people, so it's not a big percentage. It's not a trend.

But one of them did the LNP, so that was serious involvement. But the other three did. Was anybody at the IONS course — the Institute of Noetic Sciences — about five years ago? United Airlines person. I'm not sure. Was that the woman over here on my left?

[Participant 4:] Yes, there was a woman from Chicago.

[Russell:] Oh, that's different. That was just somebody I met on the plane.

But she's come to more courses, and it just comes from — she was really interested, and so I took my time. It's weird to meet somebody who's present.

What showed up this week

[Participant 5:] It seems like each of these sessions, something dramatic goes on with one of our daughters. So I'm getting to the point like, oh, it's an opportunity to respond differently.

This time she just had a baby, and she has a breast condition, mastitis. So she called me yesterday, was in the hospital, because they couldn't find a clinic open.

I basically listened for what was resourceful in her sharing, and lifted up what was resourceful. I heard the struggle, but there were very many resourceful sharings within the stress of being in the hospital. They were there. She was going to get some help. I just noticed how she was managing. Not a way she wanted to spend Father's Day, the first Father's Day. The husband was holding the baby outside. She was afraid of bringing the baby in. And I just was present with her, because she was by herself at that time.

So I asked her to hold the love that we shared, and to really find those gifts of strength within her, that she was there to get some support and help. And I ended up sharing a little bit more the next conversation. Once I got home, she was strong. She had a plan. But in this place of uncertainty, she was going to her plan, and she was not letting this defeat her desire to still nurse her baby, to be with her baby. So she was moving out of the pain into a place of nurturing.

I found that being here, I listened for resource and did not model. So that was another way I applied the work. And I didn't give her the resource. I was just listening for more resources coming from her. And I think she was more able to hear it than if I were advising.

[Participant 6:] As a massage therapist, I'm always touching, and doing this touching of other people. And I actually kind of decided to move away from that for a little while, but all of a sudden I could feel myself touching my own self. It was a kind of caressing of my own self. Just very connected to that I'm here.

And when I do it, it doesn't have the I voice that I'm so used to. It's that embodying — an embodiment of touch, and an embodiment of I'm here.

And when I was in the meditation and experiencing that voice of who I am doing its thing, and stepping back into a bigger space, which doesn't really have the I am part to it — that particular stepping back from the voice that I am seems expanded and out here, and this seems really grounded, but they feel connected.

It's just kind of percolating in there, and I'm putting it out there because I'm wondering — this stepping back place, I don't want it to be out here. I also want it to be able to be over here.

[Russell:] Yes, yes. I just want to affirm that direction. Keep sniffing up the right trail. It's got this, and it has this.

[Participant 6:] And that somehow these can — because right now they sort of feel separate.

[Russell:] Right now they feel separate, right. Keep sniffing up that trail.

[Participant 6:] Yeah.

A part that does not want to be here

[Participant 7:] When we were doing our walking meditation this morning, I noticed something inside of myself that wasn't a voice, and it wasn't really even a feeling state that I was aware of, but it was a contraction. I could just feel myself contracting, and I didn't really know, exactly at the beginning, what it was. It was very subtle. Just so subtle that I could barely feel it.

And then I tried to do this openness and loving, this warm-heartedness towards that, and I realized it was this huge recognition of — this is the part that's living. I felt it very much through my left side, a contraction through my middle. This is like an aversion, and I'm not wanting to be there. That felt real.

And really so close to me. I guess what I'm trying to say is that a lot of this stuff is so subtle. Later when we were eating, I had a very different experience. I thought about a person in the family who had said something to my husband, and that was like, oh yeah, I can love that part of me that's worried about my husband being stressed. But this thing was so much closer in, and so invisible in a way. Almost invisible.

And when I opened up to it, I was like, okay. It was really a part that had some old part around, what am I participating in this whole thing for? I don't know if I was going to extrapolate — standing in this circle, walking slowly, blah, blah, blah. But it was really ancient.

[Russell:] Yes. Yes.

You know, what I'll just throw out there for all of us is what I notice in myself and in people. I'd say everybody, but I haven't had an exception yet — that there's a part of us that just doesn't want to be here. Just doesn't want to be here. And it's deeply woven in there.

And it can feel very subtle. It can also feel overwhelmingly powerful. Can feel that.

[Silence 60 seconds]

[Russell:] Yeah. It's very important, that place.

That place, as you observe, can grow out into all sorts of stories. My experience is that when there is a compulsive mind state that wants to live in here, it often feels directly connected to the place that's just looking for an exit. Just looking for a way out.

And that is so helpful, when we can develop a capacity to be with that space.

And I can say, just as we all have — part of us just doesn't want to hear this. Don't say it. Don't say it.

Some links to this state, in my experience. It can travel in a direction of, I gotta get out of here. A direction that I can label boredom. A direction that feels like, anything but this.

It can at times feel big and dark and endless, and no way out, like no exit. And it can bring up lots of images and thoughts of dying and death. Not so much dying. Death.

So that's what I can tell you from experience, the territory that I'm sensing that's connected to. And if you are navigating that kind of territory, I'm just giving some signposts of some things that can show up there. You might have a completely different experience, but just look for those, as much as we can.

The development of our warm-hearted welcoming — we have to have practiced that a long time to be able to have it in those moments. A very strong urge not to be there.

[Participant 8:] That's a nice one. I think allowing it to be there too, because I notice in myself a slight grunt. It's like, oh, that's actually — what's that about? And allowing it, and then just, again, the kindness. It just was there. I don't know where it came from. So now I have to seek.

[Participant 9:] Sorry, I just need a summation of that — the obsessive mind state.

[Russell:] Yeah. So again, I want to be a little cautious of generalizing too much, but if we can hold it a little bit lightly, so I can say it more quickly.

Addictions. The feeling of, I have to get that, is connected in my experience. That's what I'm talking about — the compulsive mind state that leads toward what's commonly called addiction. It's like the emptiness that one begins to feel in that place that just doesn't want to be here drives behavior to get out of that.

My recommendation is many moments, very short. Being willing — if yours is to go for a drink, or to go for a quart of ice cream, or to go for whatever is the form — if it's not feeling life-giving, if it's feeling like it's forced, is to begin to create a kind of negotiation. Okay, you can have that in ten minutes, and I'm going to experience the longing and the pull and the call.

Many, many moments, over and over, and then you increase the time. And then you start having the experience that it's a temporary state. That it's one of those Wizard of Oz moments, where it feels so big, and then you pull the curtain, and it's a little guy.

But it sure doesn't feel like that when you're going toward it.

When your nervous system, whatever you want to say, has numerous experiences of that passing, that is empowerment. That is a radical empowerment.

And sitting is very helpful for that. If there are some times when you come to the cushion — that's why it's good to sit for a little bit longer periods. Those of you who've been sitting regularly, start boosting. If you're doing twenty, go to thirty. If you're doing thirty, go to forty. Start moving it so that you can have some more moments where you hate it.

Now, let me clarify what I mean by that.

Also, hopefully, you'll have more moments in which it's, oh, right, this is why I do this. There'll be more of those. And there'll be these moments where — the way I can get it, and I still can, forty-something years on the road here — certain moments where it's like something wants to jump out of its skin.

But you get enough practice of sitting through moments like that, they actually become doorways. There's an opening that's almost always behind those. So you develop a tolerance. And even a — I want to call it curiosity. I guess a little curiosity. It still doesn't feel great, but you learn to sit with it. And not focus on it, not work with it, just feel it.

And feel the subtle levels of panic, the subtle levels of negotiate — oh, well, you know, you should cancel later. But to sit with it, and to have the experience of its passing, and what opens one later, is great practice.

Meeting the part

[Participant 10:] I wanted to say that I'm extremely grateful for this being gone. It's something I've been dealing with, this particular segment, that I have more than other segments. This part of me that doesn't want to be here.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 10:] And it brings up a great deal of compassion for my partner. Because it seems like here, I have these little voices where we'll be in a walking meditation and I'll be thinking to the person that's four people ahead of me, like, all right, let's get a move on, you know? You're slowing me down here.

[Russell:] I know who it was.

[Participant 10:] And there were so many moments like that, where it's so almost comical. Just sitting down and getting into the meditation, and you hear the bell. And then the second time I was like, oh, here we go again. Three bells, and there's all these voices that come up for me.

And what I notice is, in this environment, where I'm with people for only a week at a time, there's some part of me that holds back on saying it. Whereas the compassion for my partner that comes through is that, because I spend my life with her, my day-to-day life, it's like all of me not wanting to be here gets channeled into being annoyed, and telling her she's got to learn how to put her toothbrush up, or all of this. And then it creates this bottleneck, that she is literally the person that gets to be the channel for all of my not wanting to be here.

[Russell:] Right.

[Participant 10:] And it's been — there's so many more important things that need to be done than sitting here. And it almost feels, in some way, like the fact that I'm having these thoughts, but then smiling and acting like I'm not having thoughts, makes me feel separate.

[Russell:] Yeah. Good, yes.

[Participant 10:] And from myself. That feels really good to get out.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 10:] 'Cause it felt like I've been moving around here, some part of me, in an inauthentic way.

[Russell:] Yeah. Thank you. Maybe take another minute. See if there's more that might like — maybe yes, maybe no, but just really take your time.

[Silence 36 seconds]

[Participant 10:] And then there's — I still feel like I'm sort of feeling.

[Russell:] Yeah, yeah. Feel what might like some attention in there.

[Participant 10:] It almost feels like, up until this point, I've had so many of these thoughts, and each time the thoughts come up, I've somehow felt further and further away from everyone.

It builds a whole other thought of, all right, let's just get this over with.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 10:] It's like this part of me that says, if I were to get really honest, in a few days or in a year, I might never talk to anybody again here. It's like, what's the point of even bringing any of this up?

And even saying that hurts me, because I care about everyone.

You were doing this earlier, that really resonated. Just how this part of me shows up. And when I'm in a setting where it's all flowers and roses, happiness, it's so easy for me to just smile. And then when I'm around my partner — there's a lot of authentic smiling and roses, but then there's a lot of reaction.

[Russell:] Yeah.

As you're with this, if it feels right, let that place that's been feeling inauthentic, or withdrawn, or judgmental, or whatever — let it know you're in touch with it. That it's actually helped you get back here. Seeing it. Recognizing it.

If there's anything more it wants, it can have space in there.

[Participant 10:] Yeah. I want to thank it. And it feels so wild and uncontrollable.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 10:] I want to thank that.

[Russell:] Might it feel all right to really check in? I see how wild you are, and I really want to learn to see you sooner. I know you're trying to get my attention.

[Silence 2 minutes]

[Russell:] Be in touch with it in there right now.

[Participant 10:] Feels too afraid. Feels afraid to not be doing this. It's very afraid.

[Russell:] Yeah. And seeing how afraid it is. Let it know you know it's there. Sense how afraid it is in there.

[Participant 10:] It feels afraid to not be in control.

[Russell:] Yeah. Are you sensing how it likes you to be with it now? How it's living, though? In your chest there, how it feels, or wherever you sense it.

[Participant 10:] Really afraid of not being in control.

[Russell:] And you're with it.

[Participant 10:] Yeah, it's like it wants to end this right now, so that I can be back in control of it.

[Russell:] Right, right. It wants to end this right now so it can have control. And let it know you hear that.

And just sense gently, it would be okay to spend a little more time here. And really sense — it's subtle. This is okay.

[Silence 39 seconds]

[Russell:] How are you sensing it? If it fits, sense what it wants from being in control. Sense what it wants to have happen, what it doesn't want, from being in control. See if you can sense it's willing to communicate about that.

[Silence 2 minutes]

[Participant 10:] It feels like a general, placing pieces in strategic places, so that, as they say, that way if I get hurt, it's on my own terms.

[Russell:] Yes. And really let it know you know how much it's trying to keep you safe. Just be with that. It's really trying to protect you, put the pieces in place.

And I'm guessing it feels very familiar, very known, this place.

[Silence 34 seconds]

[Russell:] How are you sensing that in there right now?

[Participant 10:] Feels like it's been allowed to loosen its grip. Soften its knuckles. Hands around a full tornado.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant 10:] Like a tornado, holding, and softening its grip a little bit.

[Russell:] There's something kind of a tender feeling about all that. Just let yourself have that right now.

[Participant 10:] It also feels like when I loosen the grip, it's not a tornado anymore. It's more windy.

[Russell:] Oh, yeah. I want you to hear that back. Feel that. As you loosen the grip, it feels like it's not a tornado out there. It's windy. A little windy.

[Participant 10:] I even have this thankfulness for this place. It takes care of you. It has a role.

I noticed that when it seemed to change from a tornado to windy, it stopped worrying about taking everybody's time.

[Russell:] Maybe that feels like a good place to just appreciate that everything in there has its place. In a welcoming environment, it brings you back to yourself.

Anything you're wanting right now?

[Silence 2 minutes]

One listening dialogue

[Russell:] I'd like to have a pause, and then I'd like, maybe before your pause, to find a partner. And it's a good time to have one listening dialogue. So you're not gonna switch over right now. You're just gonna have one person speak and one listen.

If possible, if it fits, if the energy is right, at the end take a few minutes to reflect. Maybe even write down some of the key moments in your speaking and listening time together.

A speaker can ask for a person just to be present, if they want, or to reflect back, or to give them some reminders, or to give them some guidance. You have all those choices.

And what I'd like to do is take a ten-minute break. It'll be like five after or so, and then meet up with your partner. I'd recommend something like a half hour. Can be a little less, if you like. And then you have maybe some minutes to talk, and we gather at 11:45, and we're gonna do a little movement before we have our lunch.

Okay, so that'll be the crossing. And when you're writing, when you're reflecting, what I would like to be able to do is, when we return in the afternoon, to take some moments from your listening times. To see if there was a particular comment from the listener, or from yourself to yourself, that was particularly helpful, so we learn from each other. Or moments where you didn't quite know how to navigate for yourself, or the partner felt like they wished they had other things they could have said. There are moments like that we can actually look at together.

So you can do some writing after your session.

[Participant 11:] So just one person is going to share now, right?

[Russell:] Correct. Nobody's writing during the time.

At the end, if it feels right — different sessions have different energy, and it might not feel right to talk about it. If it does, then you could, either in conversation with each other or separately, write down some of the moments that were — wow, it was really helpful in this kind of moment when I really paused, and it was silent for a long time, but I really needed that. Just little moments where something was said that was really helpful, or something you felt really confused and didn't know how to work with that moment.

So we can write down things and we can learn from each other.

[Participant 11:] I'm just a little confused. We're going to do this as two fifteen-minute segments after the break?

[Russell:] No. One person is going to speak and one person is going to listen, for as long as a half hour. And then you'll have a few minutes, ten minutes or so, to converse about it, and then you come back here, and we're going to do a movement lesson.

We'll return at three o'clock, and we'll take some time looking over the session that happened before lunch, and then we'll reverse. And you can relocate. You can locate anywhere.

[Participant 12:] What would you locate? I've not seen this before. For the product, what might it be like? What is the benefit of it? What is the worst of it? I don't understand.

[Russell:] Yeah. Okay. Let's do this. Don't use those right now. That's the answer.

The chair? Okay, me too. Someone needs a partner.

[Participant 13:] Does someone have a partner? I'm gonna want a partner, but I guess a partner would be another time. If you have a partner, I want to steal your partner. Does anybody have a partner?

[Russell:] Who's your partner? Okay, so we can work together.

[Participant 13:] I can work with you.

[Russell:] Okay.