Movement lesson

Angela 2 — Week 4, Day 5, Session 4 — 29 minutes

Summary: On the floor, a brief reflection on speaking and listening gives way to pausing the breath, smoothly, at the top and the bottom. The head and neck are turned passively by the hands — on the back, the front, and the elbows — while that pausing continues. Stepped breathing comes up into standing and walking. Silent lunch follows.

Reflecting

Please rest on the floor.

And just take a moment, as you're coming into yourself in this position, to reflect on your speaking and your listening.

There's something that resonated for you that was a kind of learning. It might be one significant thing, or not. It might be a few different things that came to you in the process of listening to yourself or listening to the others.

Seems an important learning for your inner life. Helpful to kind of underline those moments, maybe even find language for yourself for moments like that.

Seems like those moments where some kind of way of being with yourself, or a way that someone was with you, that felt helpful for your process. A way that you could acknowledge you were with yourself. Oh, that seems important for me — when I can be with myself with that quality, that's a good thing. Or someone else being with you with that quality.

Or if you were the partner, was there something, some quality that you had? Or something that you learned in the way the person was with themselves? It seems resonant for you as a learning model.

Pausing the breath

Just as you're lying here breathing, just let one hand be on your chest and one on your belly, elbows just resting on the floor if possible, if that's maybe comfortable.

You're at the top of your inhale. Notice if you can find a way to smoothly pause, and then smoothly enter the next phase. Almost like a breeze, or a hammock swinging — some sense that it comes up and slowly comes, and then yields, so that we can investigate the process of completing an inhale.

Really be there for its completion, feeling a brief pause, how the pause takes place when you kind of make it a little bit longer than usual, how that pause can be gently created, what you do with yourself, and then the beginning of the out-breath.

Rolling the head

Please place your right hand on your forehead, across your forehead, and lightly roll your head, having your neck be passive, as much as you can. It can be a very small movement. Range is not important. It's the sense of where the movement is originating, that your head and neck are learning how to receive from another source.

Kind of letting go of our usual control of our head.

Listen for the transition. When you change direction is a time when the usual control mechanism often wants to assert. So you might need to linger in that pause, and in the beginning of the new direction.

So that when the fingers kind of pull back towards center a little bit, and it pushes, feel the movement across the forehead and through the skull.

And then let that pause for a moment, though. Break. Focus.

Head and breath

And let's sense once again, just as you're lying here, kind of following the rhythm with a slightly increased pause, interested in how the inhale comes to its height, how the pause occurs, the exhale begins, and how the pause occurs at the end of the exhale.

How the inhale is not allowed. What happens in your throat, in your belly, chest. And then, not too long, just a little longer than usual, maybe a couple of seconds. And then how the breath comes in, and how that could be, again, like a breeze.

Rogan Price had the idea that most of us have a habit of holding our breath, either more with the inhale when we're expanded in the chest, or more with the exhale when we're a little deflated in the chest. I'll detect shapes of our torso, of habits. How helpful it is to notice if one of those feels more familiar than the others, pausing the breath like that. And how that could get smoother and lighter.

Once again, bring the right hand to the head, and this time, as you're turning the head with your right hand, you're also pausing the breath. So your right hand is on your head. You're turning your head with your right hand, and you're experimenting with the pause in the breath.

You're tracking subtle yet powerful events — turning of your head in a non-habitual way, and tracking non-habitual breathing. And smoothness in both is what we're listening for.

[Silence 38 seconds]

On the front

Please let that pause and come onto your front.

First, just rest your forehead on your hands, and sense just the contact of your front on the ground, and feeling of the length of your spine.

Your legs contacting the ground, space between your heels, and then begin to tune into your breathing with an intentional pause at the top of the inhale and the bottom of the exhale.

And feeling in this position, how does the inhale smoothly come to an end, feeling those last moments especially, how the breath is paused. How the exhale begins, how the exhale completes itself, and how that pause takes place, and how the new breath comes. So we're listening to those intimately.

[Silence 40 seconds]

When you feel complete for now with that, just rearrange your head and your legs, your arms, if you can stay on your front. Just kind of let yourself be as comfortable as you can be on your front for a little pause.

And then, forehead down again. Lengthen your legs. Put your hands near your head with the elbows in the air.

Begin slowly turning your head, but again, the key here is that you go slow enough that you can let the head and neck be passive to the arms and shoulder movement.

The amount of movement doesn't matter. It matters that you're initiating the movement from a non-habitual source. Letting the head be turned. So small is just as good as big.

And as you're doing that, you begin to tune to the breathing. So this is really growing attention capacity here. You've got this smooth movement of your head in a non-habitual way, and you're attending to pausing your breath in that smooth way.

So you're turning your head from your hands, the head is passive, and you're pausing your breath.

How can the head be moved? So you're not turning your head in a familiar way. And if you're not sure, stay really in the middle there, as you turn it. Because as you get further to the side, chances are your neck starts working hard again, or working again.

Your forehead's on the ground and you're letting your head be moved. So, letting go of a control.

Okay, and leave that for a moment.

Chin in the hands

And prop yourself up on your elbows, putting the base of your hands together, and let your chin rest in your hands so your hands are off the ground. You kind of have this tripod — not tripod, I guess a bipod.

Your hands are in the air, and you're, you know, like a little kid on the lawn looking out or something. Your chin is resting in your hands, a little V shape of your — and your elbows are on the ground, and you're letting your chin rest, and with a little movement of your hands and arms, you turn your head.

Not bending it. See if you can turn your head. How can you move your hands so that you turn your head in this position? A little bit. Your nose goes left and right — not bending, turning. So the nose goes left and right.

Okay? It's not the ear going towards the floor, it's the nose going left and right. A little bit. A little pushing and pulling with your hands.

And as you do that, let your attention be on your breath, and how you can smoothly hold or pause in your breath.

Chin being in the base of your hands, your fingers are along the sides of your cheeks.

It is being moved. That is a certain kind of letting go of control. That's not really following your breath.

Leave that. Come onto your back. Enjoy the ground in a more comfortable way.

On the back

Feel how your breathing is when you're just letting it be.

[Silence 31 seconds]

Feel the quality of breathing. Rhythm of breathing.

Put your left hand across your forehead. Just turn your head lightly, a little right and left, letting the head be passive, the neck be passive.

As you feel the head moving, pause your breathing.

Good.

When you feel like you've gotten a sense of that, you can lower the arm.

Feel the length in your spine, if there's some lightening in your neck.

Just these next few breaths, as you inhale — inhale in subtle steps, not abrupt steps, but like: inhale a little, pause, inhale a little more, pause, inhale a little more, pause, wait, and then exhale a little, pause, exhale a little, pause, exhale.

So, very smooth movement with these gentle pauses you can find there.

So, hand rests, arm rests.

So too, breathing can be initiated from multiple brain levels. This kind of smoothing, shifting, can affect us in very deep ways, very profound ways.

Just a little bit longer.

How smooth can that tide move — the whole process of pausing? Not pausing normally. Normally hold the breath rather unconsciously. Want to bring our awareness into it.

Coming to standing

And attending to this movement of the breath, let your legs come to standing, but go slow enough that you can attend to the movement of your breath. That you're still having this gradual inhale and exhale with brief pauses all the way through.

Legs are bending, and you're doing this breath. Let your legs come to standing as you do this breath.

Let your whole self slowly come to standing, seeing, could you have these subtle pauses through an inhale, maybe three or four, then pausing at the top, and then beginning in a subtle pausing through the exhale, and bring yourself to standing following your breath like that.

[Silence 56 seconds]

Feel, once you're standing, you can just breathe naturally. Feel the influence on your whole self.

Feel the quality of your neck, your head, your spine, inner feeling.

Surprises, as to what gets affected when we work with the breath, the head movement — two such primary functions.

Walk, move in whatever ways you like.

Feel the quality in you and around you.

Closing

You can say that there's different forms of embodied listening. This is one way of embodied listening, and being with your partner is another way of embodied listening. They have a lot of similarities.

And time for lunch. Silence for lunch. We can still enjoy sitting with each other. We're just not gonna talk, and during the break as well. We can go for a walk with somebody and not talk, that's okay. Maybe it's okay.