Movement lesson

Angela 2 — Week 4, Day 7, Session 3 — 51 minutes

Summary: On the back, the group senses the living ground and smooths the breath, then side-bends, slides a foot through the gap, and rolls the pelvis while holding a foot. Russell keeps the work light, rolls from the center, and shows how unusual positions can reorganize the hips, ribs, and back.

Sensing the ground

[Russell:] So come onto your back.

Connect to the ground forces, meaning you sense the ground.

I recommend taking off your glasses and feeling the elephant alive behind you.

Just allowing the possibility that there are forces from the earth that human beings can sense, just like animals can sense them.

And you don't have to believe it, but just don't disbelieve it. Don't assume it's just a rock or just concrete or something. So no assumption that one couldn't or one could, but allow the possibility that there's a living relationship to the surface behind you.

That not only you are bringing your consciousness there, but perhaps there are forces from below.

And then as you sense your breath, allowing that smooth transition, experimenting with the smooth stopping, pause, a smooth starting, pause.

The difference between coming to a stop like a sudden stop, or a gradual starting with a sudden sharp, or slow, like you had something in the vehicle that you didn't want to disturb. It was a sleeping baby in the vehicle, and you want to go smoothly into your pauses.

Bending to the left

And lace your hands under your head, bend your head down to the left, back a few times, just remind yourself of that. What hopefully has gotten familiar, kind of more familiar.

Your chests are designed to not only protect, but also to yield, to soften.

And so down to the left, stay there. Bring your left arm down and your right arm up. Bend your left foot to standing and your right knee out to the side, and just experiment with sliding the right foot towards the left hand and the left hand a little bit towards the right foot.

But just don't do it aggressively, just smooth and light. You may touch it, you may not. That's not the point. The point is that you can bend your side and find a way to get your pelvis moving, your arm moving, your leg moving some, and that's it.

Great. And so it's your right foot sliding under the gap. Right foot sliding under the gap that you're exploring.

And then with that foot under the gap, bring the left heel to touch the right lower leg. So the left foot stays on the floor. Slide the back of the left heel. Let the left foot stay on the floor, and just slide the back of the heel to touch the lower leg or foot somewhere.

And keep it like that, and lift your right lower leg to slide it along the left lower leg. Lift the right foot off the floor, so you're sliding the right lower leg up and down the left lower leg.

And maybe your foot could even, when it comes up into the kind of crotch, into the edge there, maybe even touch the thigh a little bit. Could the ankle, or the right lower leg, touch the back of the left thigh a little bit, and then go down.

So the right foot is under the gap, and it's sliding up the back of the left lower leg, and then touching the back of the left thigh a little bit if it can. That's it. That's great.

Good, leave that. Rest with the foot on the floor. Actually just rest, lengthen your legs and thighs. Yes. Whichever way you can do it easier.

Okay, but for now, just lengthen your legs and enjoy your life.

Holding the foot

Interlace your hands under your head, slide your head down to the left, bend your left leg to standing.

And just remind yourself of bringing the left arm down towards that left foot and the right arm upward. Just remind yourself of that more simple version that we need again, I think.

So you can bring your left hand to touch the left heel or come around the left ankle if it can. You can move the left foot closer, make it easy, bring the thumb with the other fingers, and just turn your pelvis to the right a few times. Remind yourself of that.

It's a pretty complex movement, but at this point most of you have it pretty comfortably, it seems. So one time you look up to the right, one time down to the left. Just many times. Just kind of let it get simpler, easier, more fluid. More pleasant.

Some of you can now actually experience it as a pleasant movement, whereas a couple of days ago you might not have used that word.

And then pause here. Bend your right knee out to the side, let the left foot go a little further away from your pelvis, bring that right foot under the gap again, and bring the hand over the top of that foot, over the top, if you can. If you can't, don't force it.

Of the right foot, over the top. That's right, you got it.

Okay, so holding over the top of the right foot. And so you've moved the left foot to give yourself enough space, right? That's it.

And now, holding this foot from over the top, not under the bottom, over the top, roll your pelvis to the right and back, holding this foot.

As you go to the right, so you're holding the right foot, you're over the right foot, that's it. And you're rotating your pelvis to the right, and as you do that, you might be able to pull that foot even a little bit under your pelvis. Maybe, maybe not. Don't force it.

If you do this gently, it's wonderful for your knees, for your hips. Just don't force. The movements are powerful without your ambition.

That's a number of times. Great. It's beautiful.

Now, just stay here for a moment. Slide the left heel towards the right foot, on the ground, just so that it touches, and then slide the heel up towards the knee, sliding along your lower leg a little bit.

So the right leg is bent out to the side. The right foot is in the gap. It's on the floor in the gap, and the left foot is sliding along the lower leg. That's it. On the floor. The heel is touching. The hand is on the foot, if you can. Yeah, it's in that direction. We'll try.

If by chance you can come around the knee, come around the knee. Don't have to force that. We'll make that easier.

But you're kind of reaching out with that leg.

Oh, okay, so this is a message to Lisa. Do this lesson. This is a really good one for your back, okay? So stay with this.

People miss a lesson that I know, to get to the place that they're looking for.

That's great. Okay, lower down, leave that. Rest here. Come back to neutral.

Just feel how you're being shaped. By the way—

[Silence 46 seconds]

A slow drive

Interlace your hands under your head, non-habitually, and just a few times slide your head and arms down to the right.

Enjoy entering your vertebral column and your ribs and your pelvis. Go slow.

When you're driving through beautiful countryside, you don't want to miss the mountains and the valleys and the ribs and the vertebrae and the rivers and trees, neck and the elbows, flowers, the view from the top of the mountain towards the coast, the way the waist bends near the pelvis.

You don't want to skip over all the views. You're not just getting to San Francisco, you're taking a nice drive.

Okay. Good.

Rolling from the center

Come back to neutral, bend both legs, put your left ankle on your right thigh, take your hands out from under your head, and put your hands on your left leg, the right hand near the front of the ankle, the left hand below the front of the kneecap.

If that's familiar to you, bring all that. Let the right foot stay on the floor. And yeah, you got it.

And then pull the lower leg towards your chest a little bit, gently, just light. Feel the bending of that hip joint. No force needed. Keep the foot on the floor. The right foot stays on the floor. You're just bringing that lower leg towards you, that's it.

And then slowly roll to your right, let that foot come to the floor. You remember that. And put a little weight on that foot if you can, and then you come back, and you do that a number of times.

What part of your body are we using to help you roll back?

Yeah, go from your golden ball. Think of your center. Turn. Now, imagine that you're turning back from your center, and that that's activating the whole movement. See? Yeah.

[Student:] I can't get just the core.

[Russell:] Okay, so use what you need, but think from here.

So again, you think from there, but also have your eyes looking in the right time. So you begin from here, but let everything participate — your head, eyes, shoulders — into lifting this leg. Okay, right.

Okay, here's the thing.

[Student:] No, haven't that one.

[Russell:] That one got you. Okay, so get a little help from your foot.

Okay, get a little help from your elbow, but keep lightening the push. So you're gradually using more, that's it.

Okay, now pause when your left foot's on the floor, and take your left hand and put it on the floor in front of you, and slide that hand above your head and behind you. Begin to roll your left shoulder towards the floor, and then slide it back.

So you're sliding that hand. The hand is in contact with the floor whenever possible. It may not be able to stay there. But you're rolling a little towards your back.

The left foot stays on the floor.

[Student:] Tom's gonna reach my hand.

[Russell:] There we go. You just need to go. That's right. There we go.

Instead of the golden ball, you have Tom.

[Student:] My, my, my Tom Dan.

[Russell:] A number of times, your left arm back and forth with that. That's right. If the left foot can stay in contact with the floor, that's right. And actually, this will help you also, this movement.

[Student:] Oh, this I can do.

[Russell:] Yeah, but feel the connection between this movement and the other. It's a lightening in the chest. Okay, now we've got that.

Keep your left hand over on the left side. Okay, and let go with your right hand. Okay, so your left foot is standing on the right side. That's it.

And this is about the time you wonder, what am I doing here? Right?

And interlace your hands under your head. And slowly, slowly. Nose towards the ceiling if possible. Turn your head so the nose is towards the ceiling. That's it, nice frame.

And now bend down to the left. Bending movement down, go slow and smooth. Come back to neutral, bend to the right. Bend down to the right, down to the left. Keep it a little bit in that direction. That's nice.

Okay, pause. Slowly — I don't want to. Slowly disentangle. Slowly, slowly, lengthen. Pause. Pause here.

You will be.

[Silence 46 seconds]

The other side

Bring your right leg to standing. Bring your left knee out to the side. Interlace your hands non-habitually behind your head. Slide down to the right.

And keep your head over to the right, lengthen your right arm downward. And maybe just at first, connect to your right foot, your right ankle, your right heel, something on the right. And you can let the left arm lengthen upward, and just remind yourself of the rolling of your pelvis to the left. Let that get easier.

And so keep that right foot in touch with the floor if possible, so you're not lifting the heel if possible. And you're one time looking up to the left, and the next time looking down to the right.

You can touch your pant leg if that's easier. If getting to the foot is too much, you can kind of pull on the pant leg. That's it. Feel that opening in the ribs on the left, lengthening.

And then let go with that hand and bring the left foot into the gap. So you might need to move the right foot a little further away, so your left foot has space and you don't have to bend the foot so much.

And then just slide the foot a little bit towards the hand, a little bit away, just kind of finding that. It's like stroking a violin or something, maybe, that kind of thing.

And then with the foot under there, see if you can touch near the ankle or heel, and slide up the right lower leg and slide down. See if you can find a way.

So the left is sliding along the right to start. The left is sliding along the right. The right is standing. The left is being lifted. It's an unusual movement, to lift your thigh like that, to activate the inner aspects and to slide up and down.

Then if you can touch the thigh and even maybe slide a little bit down the inside or the back of the right thigh, do that. Good.

And then lower the left leg, and slide the right heel along the floor, touching the left lower leg. Just go up and down a little bit. Take your time.

If by chance you come around the Cape of Great Knee, you can do that. The sailboat, you know — the great explorers always found the Cape of Knee an interesting place. And right there. Yeah, that's just hanging out there. Yeah.

That's good. Okay, great. Come back and just rest on your back.

How to practice

Yeah. So there are two main ways I recommend experimenting.

One is to just play ten minutes with any of the movements. Like you get on the floor, you think of them, and you begin with some of the simpler ones, pushing off the foot and just turning your pelvis like that.

Now, I also recommend, oh, maybe once or twice a week, doing a full lesson, and doing them in the order I presented them.

And then if you did a lesson, you'd have material for your little five, ten, fifteen-minute plays for the rest of the week. You'd kind of work off of what you did in that whole lesson.

Then you'd come back, you'd do the next lesson, and give you some more to play with in your little five, ten, fifteen-minute exploration.

So that's a really beautiful way of growing the series into your body. Yeah.

Rolling to the left

Okie doke. Bend both legs. Put the right ankle on the left thigh, your knee.

And get hold of the leg with the right hand just below the front of the kneecap, the left hand in front of the ankle, and just light, roll to your left. Roll to your left, bringing that foot to the floor, taking your time, to feel how that foot can make contact and how you could eventually begin to bring the pelvis forward so you are starting to put some weight onto that lower leg. Light and easy.

Just doing that movement. As an example, Bob, just this movement. Taking a little time — maybe first, if you were at home, maybe first to lift the left foot and get hold of the leg, so you kind of loosen it up a little bit — and then to roll with this is just a beautiful movement.

So let that go all the way through your head, so you get the whole rotation, and you begin to put weight on that leg. And it's very empowering for your hip joint and for your back.

And then pause when you're over to the left. Take your right hand and put it on the floor, and begin to let it lengthen out on the floor, and begin to experiment with sliding the right hand overhead and behind you, letting that right foot maintain contact with the floor if possible, and sliding that right hand.

As often as possible, the hand is in touch with the floor. It might need to lift. You're not making a full circle. You're just going above your head and behind you. When the right shoulder is settled to the floor, and you've got your whole upper back basically on the floor, then you can reverse direction. That's it.

And feel. See, we're rotating that whole upper body around the pelvis in this position, and you can feel what that does. It moves your pelvis from a very different origin.

And as Feldenkrais would say over and over, when you can mobilize anything from a different origin, it gets to reorganize in the brain. That's why you can have a real change in your hip joints and backs from these unusual positions. That's one of the reasons.

Okay, let that elbow be kind of long. It doesn't have to be so bent, Peter. Let the arm be kind of out on the floor. The hand turned over, that's it.

If you can hold the foot, great. If that's too much, though — I mean the ankle — that's great.

Okay, that's good. And slowly unwind, come back to your back. Pause there.

[Silence 59 seconds]

Foot in the gap

Bend both legs to standing. Open your left knee out to the side.

Put your hands under your head, bend yourself down to the right. Bring your right hand down, left arm up. Slide your left foot towards your right hand, left foot into the gap. Reach over the top of the foot, so you're holding that foot if possible. Again, don't strain. Please listen to yourself. Don't force.

Lessons will work on you if you stay towards your edge, but not over that edge. So find a way to shift it if you need to.

So the direction is that the right foot would be standing, and the left would be on its outer edge. In that gap, your right hand would be either on the foot or near the left foot, and you're rotating your pelvis from here.

And as the pelvis rotates left, you might find you can bring that foot further under your pelvis a little bit, maybe. That's it. Do it a number of times.

Yeah, you're rotating your pelvis to the left, and as the pelvis rotates, you might find you can pull that foot a little further under. Maybe that might be comfortable. If not, don't force it.

Now, slowly, slowly begin to slide your right foot around your left knee. And slide back. Do that a few times. Good.

And keep your right foot over on the left side. Take both hands and interlace them under your head. And slide your head back to neutral and over to the left. Slide back and forth a few times.

Feel this bending of your chest in this position. Go slow. Adapt what you need to adapt, so that you don't feel like you're over your edge. Smooth. You can still breathe.

And when you slide down to the right, reach with your right hand towards the left foot.

Then let's go with that foot. Put the hands under the head once again. Keep the foot over to the left. And slide the head down to the left. Let the left arm come out and reach for your right foot.

Okay, you're likely not going to touch it. You're reaching in that direction. You see how the ribs could bend, even in this position.

Okay. Feel that, breathe there, and then let your arms just freely slide on the floor. The right hand goes down towards the left foot, and then your whole body shifts, and your left hand goes towards the right. It's like you're doing a bit of snow angels on the floor. One arm goes up and one goes down. The hand is going towards the opposite foot, and you're letting the ribs bend. Let your chest bend. It's not just moving the arm. It's the bending of the chest relative to your pelvis where the groovy stuff is.

That's it. That's good.

Careful, old chest. One side it gets longer, that's right. And less rotation of the head. Beautiful.

Leave it. Lie on your back.

[Student:] Say yay, Moshe.

[Russell:] Say again?

[Student:] Swirl of joy.

[Russell:] Nice.

Feel the breathing.

[Silence 2 minutes]

Side to side

Bend your legs. Put your left ankle on your right thigh near the knee. Bring your right foot off the floor, in the air. And bring your arms up on the floor overhead, and just roll — to actually get hold of your leg once again, the same way we did before.

And you can lower that right foot. You can just use it to get hold, like it kind of carries your leg up, and roll to your right. And then, as you're in the air, let go of your leg and switch your legs in one movement and go down to the other side. So you change over.

So the right leg comes off, the left ankle goes on the right, and you just, in one movement, go to the other side.

Right now your arms are guiding your leg. In a moment they're going to be free. Right now they're guiding your leg, just to make sure you're really coming onto that foot, and you're able to really put some weight on it. And so your whole self — make it simpler, lighter, so you just flip from side to side, like a cat.

And then you can just let your arms be on the floor and circle overhead. And your hands can be on the floor as much as possible, and your legs just go, and you go from side to side, coming to the floor with that foot.

As much as you can, the sole of the foot comes to the floor, and if possible, above where the knee is. That's it.

Just think of you as golden ball. Just turn, like a cat. That's it.

Okay, leave it. Rest on your back.

[Student:] What was that?

[Russell:] Like a what?

[Student:] A hippopotamus.

And a cow. So laughed the hippopotamus.

[Russell:] Game for one more.

Opening the hip

Bend your right leg to standing, left leg out to the side. Slide your left foot under the gap.

Bring your right hand around the top of your left foot if you can. Or get near it. Bend your ribs. We're bending the ribs to do that. We're not just trying to reach. We're letting it bend.

Then bring the right foot around the left knee, and you can let go with the right hand, bring the left hand to that right foot if you can, and begin to bring the right knee away from your chest.

You can let your lower back go forward a little bit. Your right knee away from your head, so it's in a footward direction. Your left hand, if possible, is over the top of the right foot. And you're bringing the knee away from the head in a footward direction. That's it. It's like you're opening that hip joint. The right knee goes away from your head. That opening of the hip joint. That's it.

And slowly begin to bring the sole of the right foot towards your head. The knee goes away from you. Slide the foot a little bit towards you. Okay, so just hold it like that. That's good enough.

Holding that foot, or being near it, bring your right hand towards your left foot. Yes, just in the direction is good.

And how can you hold both feet, or be near that, and bend the ribs a little bit down to the right? Let the head slide a little bit down to the left. Feel how you can slide.

And slowly release your feet. Bring your left leg to standing and your right leg out to the side. Slide your right foot under the gap, and see if you can get hold over the top of that right foot and slide your left foot around your knee.

It's a good time to smile. And just kind of slide that foot around and back a few times. Get it lighter, more playful, freer.

And just notice if you could possibly hold that right foot with your left hand, or get near it.

Then you can let that go and get the right hand around the left foot, and see if you can bring the left knee away from your head a little bit. Think of the lower back going forward, opening that hip joint. That's it. Awesome.

If you can hold both feet, do so, or get near that. Don't strain. The knee is going away from the head.

And then you just do this last movement of bending your head and your chest, once to one side, once to the other. So your whole chest and your head can bend around this position of your pelvis. That's it.

Let it go in both directions. So you're going left and right. Fine. How can you bend those ribs down to the left, even in this position?

Okay, let it go. Lie down. Lengthen your legs.

You just feel what the shape of yourself is like, what your breathing is like, what's interesting for you.

Feel how your back is on the floor.

And then roll to your side, come on up, and see how that lives in you, for you, through you.

And feel what's happened with your ribs. Come up slow.

Feel the shape of your chest. Which ribs have moved that maybe haven't moved in a while? And feel how your hips and pelvis take weight. Walk a little bit.

Feel the quality of the floor under your feet. You put weight on a hip, what that's like through you.

Take your time to sense. As you walk and the weight goes through your foot, knee, hip, back, feel that quality.

Okay.

Standing together

Let's stand together. Let's stand in a circle together.

And — wait a minute, or is that knowledge? We're gonna be below. Wait for you to get. Just take a moment, and just — improvements that we're experimenting with, getting lighter and clearer with, data chips and everybody around.

There's much to do with how this is organized, how this relates, and the even of the chat.

It's been so great. I'm gonna be leaving quite quickly. I've got a board meeting in an hour. Move on to that. It's a blessing.

So thrilled to know that we're growing onward from here. I encourage your interacting in between. Karen's idea of taking a book and working with it, or having a partnership to stay connected. It's really so helpful.

All the material — encourage referrals.

Oh yeah, please help Valerie, cause I have to take off, and I'm not gonna be able to do the loading and everything.