Discussion

Angela 2 — Week 5, Day 5, Session 7 — 27 minutes

Summary: A short standing warm-up and partner touch lead into a debrief of the focusing triad. People share what helped — speaking without notes, being companioned in a hard place, and how notes show rhythm and change. Russell distinguishes image from living experience, then closes the circle for dinner.

Waking the body

[Russell:] Stand for a moment.

You shift your weight. Bring some energy. There's a lot of sitting, listening, what you might call focusing.

As you come separate, you feel a little wide. You come onto your right leg, like you're laying on the bed. You feel that length of your whole right side. You let the knee have some give — that tightening of the knee. And look up, beyond your hand, way up and way down.

Just the left, left, left, left, with a kind of scan, really — those cardinal places: the heel, the metatarsals, the knees, reaching up, the legs, up through your spine, down your legs. Slow down some.

Very gradually. Oh God.

All through your whole body. The whole body. Not stop — just slow, but all the way from the head.

Very, very slowly pick up the speed again. Let your wrists go, let your ankles go, let your occiput go, your jaw go.

[Silence 2 minutes]

And just hang over, with your knees bent, and go to a partner.

All over. Not massaging, but light, bright, light, bright. Well, somebody — Valerie — light, bright, light, bright. You can include the head, you can include the legs, include the body, include the feet. Light and bright.

Just wake up, wake up, wake up. Light and bright.

Okay, and slowly, calmly.

How the process moves

[Russell:] Just take a moment to reflect back on your experience in that process.

On one level, it seems like one person is focusing, one is companioning, and one is writing, but it doesn't necessarily work that way in your inner world. Sometimes the focuser learns a lot about

companioning. Sometimes the companion learns a lot about another way of focusing that they don't use, but it seemed important. Sometimes the same thing happens for the writer, you know?

It's really helpful to be exposed to — exposed to what? It's not focusing only, or most importantly. It's different ways of being with your living process.

And that's what we're learning about. What are the ways that my living process responds in forward movement? How does my living — it's kind of like finding out, do you digest nuts well, or something, you know? It's like, how does my living process move forward?

Oh, it really likes a lot of space. Oh, it really needs the feeling of somebody really close. It really needs — what does this one need?

And maybe it's general. I tend to need few words, or lots of words. And maybe sometimes it's, this time I really need you to be a little further away — either to your own presence, or to the other.

So we learn, just like learning to be with a living being: what's the kind of being with that it needs now?

You know, you might be a person who really likes a lot of contact with your loved ones, and sometimes you don't. Sometimes you need more space. Or you might be a person who needs a lot of space, even though you care for them. You really — too much contact, and you get edgy.

You're not a bad person. It's knowing how your process works, and how it's working at that time.

And when we can be true to our inner process, it's amazing how — it's not hiding, and it's not — yeah, I mean, it's amazing how it can move.

So let's just, before we have dinner, I'd like to learn a little bit from each other's experience, and then we'll come back to it tomorrow, and then we'll get another round, and like that. But just a few things that were very helpful, or that you learned because something wasn't helpful and you kind of found what might have been.

And it could also include questions, but it might be discoveries.

So, yes, please.

From the groups

[Participant:] Echoing what you just said, that everybody learns — I think I can report for our client that we understood the trajectory of the session the same way. Sort of. It came out from each of the players.

[Russell:] And then how was it delivered?

[Participant:] Yeah, and then issues of timing, issues of whatever they were. I sensed them. The focusers sensed them, the listener sensed them, and it changed as they — everybody got aligned.

[Russell:] Interesting.

Yes, please, Lori.

[Participant:] I actually feel like I might be able to do this.

[Russell:] You mean as a companion, or as a focuser, or as a —

[Participant:] Yeah.

And we're just really grateful that we have the opportunity to do this. And I think, as I'm reflecting back — we didn't even really talk about this, but as I'm thinking back, probably the most helpful thing was that I didn't have my notes in front of me. And when I needed to have something to say, I had to come up with it. I was having to remember, or find a place in me where something came in, instead of —

[Russell:] Yeah.

Well, you know, something I would say, Lori, just from knowing you over the years — I would have great confidence that coming out of you would be what's in line with what we're working with.

Yeah, so I support you in that. I don't think it's bad to learn language and stuff, but I like that — popping it off the top of your head.

Welcome back.

[Participant:] I was just going to say, Lori was the companion for me as I was working with the session. I also have done more solo focusing than with partners. And I've also been hesitant to jump in there with somebody else's process.

And it's amazing to me how we've been steeping in this, reading about it. We just looked at this on the board. And when I was with something that was really a challenging place, and kind of relying — I could not have done that without her. You know what I mean? I was like, okay, and now I don't know what to do. What do I do here?

And it was amazing for me also to sense how deeply helpful it was to have willingness to support me.

[Russell:] That's beautiful.

And what happens in the companioning sessions — you'll be learning skills for your solo focusing, because it just gets more close to you, and more spontaneous, on how to listen to yourself. So that's a learning in that way.

Image and living experience

[Participant:] One thing — I was the focuser. And I had an unusually imaginal —

[Russell:] Right.

[Participant:] Very, very difficult to put into language, though. And so at first, my listener was asking me to come into my body.

[Russell:] Right.

[Participant:] And it didn't work.

[Russell:] Right. Yeah. Yeah, it can be like that.

So let me say this. Going toward the physical body first is a good strategy. If it's not connecting, the next step I go to is the experiential body — which is, when I say body, I'm not just talking about inside the skin.

So sometimes I feel, oh, it's like there's something out here that I'm with. That's a living experience, and this is part of my body at this point. The way I'm using the term body — this something that's kind of hovering, and it's a little dark, and it's out here — I'm in a living experience of my experiential body.

Okay?

Now, it's different, though. Let me just make — if it's — and I'm not saying this is unworkable, but this is a distinction worthy of something. If I'm with this dark cloud that's sitting here, and I have a feeling for it, or it's more like I kind of have an image of an angel flying in space.

Now, we may be able to work with that, but I want you to know that that's different than the tangibility of living experience that this person was having.

Right? So I'm not saying that that's a wrong experience or something, but it's a different level of living experience. We would then want to help that person — well, sense in yourself how you are with that, or something that brings it into a relationship that's more living.

[Participant:] Yeah, yeah.

[Russell:] Does the distinction I'm making make sense?

[Participant:] Yeah, yeah. Working with that. That livingness, right?

[Russell:] Yeah.

Notes

[Participant:] A question on the note-taking role. Because I found the notes were something I was doing, but mostly what it felt like was connecting to both — holding space for both the listener and the focuser. And at one point I was like, why am I taking notes? Like, close this, and really be with them. Just curious about the use of —

[Russell:] Okay, so who used the notes? So what happened? How was that helpful?

[Participant:] So I — I was the note-taker, and I took extensive notes. I tried to take every word. And they translated them into French. So if you would like the French version, we will send it to you tonight, online. With excuses.

[Russell:] Transcript, yes.

[Participant:] I'll add that. And what I did also was to note the time every five minutes. And it's interesting, because the first page is five minutes. Then after that, we have a timing of the thing. That's interesting.

So the first five minutes are lots of talking, if I can tell — lots of notes. And then after five minutes, it slows down. So five to ten is half a page. Ten to fifteen, half a page. Fifteen to twenty, half a page. And at twenty, it's done. There's almost nothing, I'd say.

So the notes were useful to see the rhythm of the session. A lot of exchanges, and after that the person is more inside, and it slows down. And when it was over, it was at twenty, and then it was over.

Nettie, the focuser, said a sentence — the meaning of what it was — okay, and done. And after that, anything that was said was useless.

[Russell:] Interesting.

And was there any — either for you, or any of the other groups — was there any referring back to the notes that seemed helpful, in addition to the timing? Were there any words, or any sentences, or any things about that? You know what I mean?

[Participant:] What was helpful for me, as the focuser — Valerie took notes, and there were some things at the end that we had questions about, and the interaction, and it was very helpful.

[Russell:] So you could look at what you said, and then what was said back, and kind of go through how that worked in you.

That's part of the intention here. And you might — because you guys went a little bit long, you didn't have time. I don't know.

It can be really interesting to notice — what I get most interested in with this is when there's an energetic shift in the process. When the process opens or closes, what was said at that point? Or where was the attention at that point?

That's what I find really, really interesting.

Like a conscious dream

[Russell:] In groups like this — and this is an invitation — anyone who feels like they would get more, maybe use some time before we gather in the evening. Take 15 minutes and sit together. You might learn something.

But I've had people, in some of the graduate retreats — the focuser wanted the notes for themselves, took them home, and I'd get an email a few weeks later: wow, I've worked with that session a few times since. That it was like a template for further investigation. And that was really interesting.

Your session would be like that.

Because it's like — you know what it's like? For people who relate to the richness of dream work, it's like having a conscious dream in which your inner life is speaking to you, and you can only mind so much of it in 25 minutes. But you're getting all these threads of possible meaning and direction.

And the inner life often just feels so grateful that that is seen, and is allowed to unwind, and energy appears because bound places open.

[Participant:] Yes. I was going to say, back to — this is related to this session, but the other day, when I spoke with Karen, there were these profound images that came, and it felt to me like they were coming from my spirit, very, very directly. And I actually wrote down everything I could recall, when I got to the room that night, because it felt like a dream.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant:] So I've been focusing with this man for — must be eight years, and it's on the phone, and so we both take notes. And at one point he was saying, like, nothing shifts, this is the same. And it was really helpful for me to give him those notes, so that he could see that, man, it's really shifting. Like, there's a familiar thing that you're doing in these sessions, but no, it's not what you thought. So that was an interesting thing to see, that the process had changed.

[Participant:] Just also on that. When we came out of it, giving feedback, I said I thought maybe I didn't need to be led in as long. And part of that came from that I always lead myself in. I'm not used to receiving that kind of help.

And so the guide said — or Karen said — you know, it never hurts to just stay with that grounding. It never hurts to be a little longer. And that sense of rushing through something to get there, it was just reminding me that's a habit. And to take that waiting place, even to enter — it was just different. And because it was different, I was thinking I didn't need it. But it was really delightful, and it ended up being very useful in some of what came on.

[Russell:] We had an almost identical conversation.

[Participant:] I was the note-taker, and I wrote extensive notes. I was doing it as if I was going to a movie, and taking notes — placing her right hand to her chest. And then dot, dot, dot, there was a pause. And then dot, dot, dot, there were two breaths. As if I was in it. I almost felt like I was in it with her.

I even have the experience of being with Lori as well, because I could feel the times where things were really shifting. And when they were shifting, I did asterisks on the areas that I thought were very poignant. And it's very helpful to write that all out.

[Russell:] Oh, that's good.

And you know what's amazing — and I'm not saying this is going to be true, but again, I've had experience with people writing out sessions, getting the session, getting what was living in her. Not hers, the same, but what lives in her lives in you, in your form. And that can get some movement.

Like, there's a process that I've grown, that we won't get to do this time, but we will get to do next time, where somebody focuses on something in a triad. Somebody else takes the same subject. It's not even your subject. And how does that live in you? Not what she felt about it. And everybody has the experience. It doesn't matter where I start. It has meaning, an important meaning.

[Participant:] That's like taking the sense, when we sit and read the triads, and we talk about what we're feeling, and then we all feel it. It's just the next lesson.

[Russell:] Right, there you go.

One last observation

[Russell:] We'll have one more, and then we should go over to dinner.

[Participant:] So I just wanted to say one observation, as the focuser. Before we picked partners, I had already made up my mind that I was going to be the note-taker.

[Russell:] Right.

[Participant:] Because I did not want to do focusing.

[Russell:] Right.

[Participant:] There's not enough space to do it.

[Russell:] Definitely not. Definitely not.

[Participant:] And someone says, I'll be the note-taker, and Bob says, well, I don't have anything on my mind. And I said, well, all right, I'll be the note-taker.

But one observation that I just wanted to make, for me, that was really profound — I had no idea what I was going to focus on going into it, but having two male presences in this experience, for me. And I could say the same about other parts of me if I were to do it with females.

But this particular part of me that came up — I don't know how comfortable it would have been, coming out with a female presence, as it was with the male presence. So that was just a real amazing observation. Again, there could be another part of me that might not feel so comfortable with a male presence. It might feel more — but there was that, that just really allowed for that part of me to come forward.

[Russell:] Nice, nice. Yeah, yeah.

Closing

[Participant:] Since there is no more comments, I was wondering if you would think about all these notes and make a Netflix series out of them.

[Russell:] Oh, that's great. Oh, that's good.

I know we could talk longer right now, and I'm a little torn about it, because it's rich. And I know that they like to put out their food, and I didn't tell them I'd be late, so I feel — I'm so grateful for how respectful they are of everything we need, that I want to treat them with the same care.

Great. Thank you all so much. We'll continue this conversation. We're going to meet at 7:15 tonight? Is that enough time for everybody? What do you think?

[Participant:] 7:15 tonight.