

Inviting Intimacy

A Workshop Led By Jan Day

What does inviting intimacy mean to you? Does intimacy mean sexual contact to you? According to facilitator, Jan Day, who runs this 3 day workshop, the latter is still a common mistake. "In fact, it's about being able to take your emotional clothes off rather than your actual ones," she says. "You can have sex in a very non-intimate way so intimacy is not sex. This workshop is about being intimate with yourself first, in other words, becoming aware of your feelings, and then becoming aware of how your feelings change when you encounter someone else. Inviting Intimacy gives you the opportunity to become conscious of your patterns of behaviour, then a chance to change them in relating to men or women.

This is the chance to explore vulnerability and tenderness. It's what we are all yearning for."

Nisha is a GP in her 50s, who has done quite a lot of work with Jan including Inviting Intimacy. "When I first did intimacy work, I felt it was about me moving towards a sensual relationship with someone," she says, "whereas now I realise it about being totally present with whatever is going on inside you, whether alone or in relationship with someone else. It's really about going slowly and finding that heart connection. It's not about pulling away you feel critical about someone, it's about allowing those uncomfortable feelings to arise and seeing what there actually is between you. Shyness, awkwardness, they can all lead to intimacy."

While David, a 45 year old IT worker feels the workshop has given him all sorts of insights into how he could improve his own behaviour in different relationships

from friends to family to potential partners. "Jan creates an amazing space which allows you to learn more about yourself and how you respond to different situations and people. I learned how to open up in terms of communicating. I really got in touch with what I feel which is incredibly valuable because so often I've been too busy working for this kind of exploration. That's helped me in terms of relating. I also learned a lot from hearing what other people were feeling which was often very different to me. We even had the chance to spend some time with the person we felt was the most different to us. For me, it was a woman whom I perceived as being angry, and hostile. Gradually in our meeting, our differences melted. That was a very powerful experience."

Biba is a coach who went to this workshop because she wanted "something to move in my life". She admits the work was sometimes out of her comfort zone but maintains that that was also a reason to be attracted to it. "The active meditation enables such a great level of release, it's incredible," she says. "I've never encountered anything like it. It was brilliant to witness some real, raw emotions that were being allowed to come out in such a well held space. I never felt unsafe. Jan held it so well. That meant a lot of trust was built up in the group."

Jan stresses that Inviting Intimacy is about knowing what your boundaries are, and being able to be clear and vocal about them. "Being able to say a very clear yes, and a very clear no, enables intimacy because everyone can trust those genuine responses. I do some work with physical touch so that participants

can really experience where their boundaries are. You are learning to be authentic, initially with yourself, and then with others."

And there is gentleness, fun and dance too. "I love the way Jan brings sexual energy into the workshop by allowing its presence rather than over-inviting it," says Biba. "So much personal development work entails keeping sex and power out of the way, here it's invited in a lovely way."

Thirtysomething Ruby, a community worker, says Inviting Intimacy has sent her in a new direction with men. "We did some interesting exercises where we moved towards and away from other people," she says, "and then we witnessed how we felt when we were close or a long way away from them. At first, I found myself wanting to get close very quickly and then, glad to be far away again. But the more I practised, the slower I could be, and then I could feel myself being sad when I was far away. Eventually, I could feel myself having some sexual feelings too which for me is

great because so often I get frozen in that way because of something that happened in my past."

Since she's been back home, Ruby says she has been feeling a lot more open with herself and with men. "I feel that I'm getting a lot more attention from men," she says. "Perhaps I'm allowing it more. I don't feel so threatened. And I'm also finding more men attractive. I'm feeling safe to explore all of this now. There was something very, very healing for me on this workshop."

Some names have been changed.

Jan Day's workshops can be found on janday.com, or by phone 020 8123 9831

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Being In Love takes place 30 April - 2nd May in Canterbury. The next Inviting Intimacy workshop will take place in Autumn.

Consult Jan's calendar to find out where and when. See page 15

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