

INTRODUCTION TO LIVING TANTRA

by Rose Rouse

Relationship expert and intimacy coach, Jan Day, has a signature week long workshop every Easter called Living Tantra 1 which is challenging, nourishing and sexually healing. I did it six years ago and it was the most exciting workshop that I'd ever done because it was so full and so expansive. I felt it put me in contact with a richer way of living on all levels – spiritual, sexual, physical, emotional and societal. Recently, Jan has decided to create a two day Intro To Living Tantra so that newcomers can have an introductory workshop all to themselves.

"I do have other introductory courses," she explains, "like Inviting Intimacy and Being In Love but they focus more on relating and feeling whereas Intro To Living Tantra will home in specifically on how do I feel about myself as a woman or a man. It will contain a lot of boundary work because it's so important in tantra to know to say 'yes' when you mean 'yes' and 'no' when you mean 'no'. We will work with various exercises, some including touch, to explore these boundaries. This weekend, like the other workshops I offers, is created so that participants open up to what they are really feeling and coming alive in their bodies, but it's particular focus is sexuality."

At what time in their life journeys do people find themselves being attracted to these courses? "Typically people will be feeling dissatisfied with their lives as they are," she explains, "they want to experience more of their own aliveness and also more of their spiritual nature.

They are disillusioned with consumerism and the world of work, and they want to find out what else there is out there. Often until people are in their 30s, they are still caught up searching for fulfilment in success and achievement in material ways or at work, but there comes a time when they want more meaning and fulfilment in their lives and they know that doesn't come from the commercial world. The inner world beckons and a need for deeper experiences."

I was out with a friend last night who is thinking of starting to do some of these workshops. She wanted to know initially if participants have to take their clothes off? The answer is that no-one ever has to remove one item of clothes if they don't want to. That's why boundaries are so important. Neither Inviting Intimacy nor Being In Love involve even the invitation to remove clothes, whereas Intro To Living Tantra could offer that possibility because it is more focussed on the body and sexuality.

Secondly, she wanted to know if this type of tantra work included singles. Yes, I explained to her, Jan's workshops are mostly (there are some workshops specifically for couples too) open to both singles and couples (who have to decide their boundaries with reference to how they are going to work with others). Most of the structures are not done in a one on one situation, they are done in small groups of either three or four people. This means that one on one intensity is removed and participants get to test their boundaries around touch with several people, which is very useful.

During the workshop, there are several emotional and physical pointers. Are you connecting to your feelings? What have you shut down? Is your body alive? Are you willing to open to whatever you're feeling? "That's why we do lots of dancing," says Jan, "getting into our bodies connects us to our feelings and it's almost certain that people will come across feelings around their sexuality but also perhaps joy, anger, and sadness which they have closed down in their lives. Intro To Living Tantra is very much about coming alive in your feelings and body."

Touch is very important in this weekend workshop. "Touch evokes so much," says Jan, "because we're touched on so many levels, so much of us gets touched. I teach about subtle touch and being sensitive to each other's touch. There's a quality to loving touch that is so special and nurturing, it's distinct from sensual touch. And sensual touch is good too. Participants get to practice giving and receiving touch in a way that is very practically useful for them and well as an extension of their pleasure zones. These structures can be exquisitely joyful but they can also be painful because so much emotion can be held in our bodies."

And communication which is clear and compassionate is another component of Intro To Living Tantra. "I'm often working with different ways of expressing what people are feeling," she says, "and also skilful methods of sensitive but sometimes challenging feedback."

What else can participants expect? "Lots of different meditations, often ones where they move, drawing pictures to express feelings, breath work, and circle work so they can the opportunity to express feelings and everyone witnesses them," she says.

Intro to Living Tantra gives people the permission to live and to love without suppressing their sexual natures. "It's really about bringing the innocence of sexuality to the fore instead of that forced sexiness that goes on everywhere in the media," says Jan..

The next Intro to Living Tantra: 26 - 28th Oct. Plus there's a Living Tantra Taster day at Alternatives on December 2nd. New Year workshop Passion, Power and Love Dec 28 to Jan 2nd.. More info – do call for a chat – on 020 8123 9831 jan@janday.com www.janday.com