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## ARE YOU SCARED OF INTIMACY?

by Jan Day

'I never like any of the men or women I meet'. 'I never seem to meet anyone'. 'I find myself repelled as soon as he/she falls in love with me'. 'All the good men/women are already taken'. 'It's not worth the effort because when we do get close, they leave'.

Are your alarm bells ringing? Do some of these statements sound familiar to you? If so, you may be frightened of intimacy. So why do we avoid intimacy when it's what we secretly yearn for? And it's the very quality that would nourish us so deeply?

First of all I should clarify what I mean by intimacy. To be intimate implies a deep knowing, a level of transparency that allows us to see ourselves and the one we're intimate with. It's important to note that we can be intimate without being sexual, and that we can be sexual without being intimate. These are often common mistakes with regards to intimacy. The starting point of any

intimacy with another, is knowing how to be intimate with our own self.

Intimacy starts with listening, getting to know and accept ourselves, and learning to BE with our own self - including the more uncomfortable parts like jealousy, shame, and anger. This listening with kindness gives us a foundation to be able to express what is true for us without needing to pretend or numb ourselves out.

Once at home with ourselves, we can start to reveal our inner world to another person and show them who we are, what we feel right now and at the same time see them for who they are. Intimacy is to BE and make friends with all that we feel and from this place to connect with each other.

When we are intimate, we are open, nothing is hidden. In revealing that to another we become vulnerable, unprotected, open to being hurt and also open to all the fears and demands of the

other. They could walk away, reject, ridicule, or they could want more than we want to give, engulf us, or we could lose ourselves in them and forget we have a separate existence.

So no wonder we're scared of intimacy! But in avoiding it and protecting ourselves from these perils - we also protect ourselves from really being seen and being loved.

In order to confront our fear of intimacy, we need to learn to be aware of the fear and instead of covering it up or pushing it away as we usually do, we learn to do the opposite. This way, we give our fear a soft welcoming space and embrace it. At this point, it melts away or softens so that we can easily let it be.

When we explore intimacy in one of my workshop situations, it is obvious that many people feel more comfortable alone than in intimate connection. In fact, they feel uncomfortable and even afraid if any intimacy is prolonged. Let us call one member of this 'uncomfortable' group, Jamie.

At the other end of the spectrum, we find someone like Sally, who feels much more comfortable when close and connected than she does when she is alone. But simultaneously, she feels anxious and afraid that she will lose that closeness. This indicates that she also has fears around intimacy and may avoid it in order to avoid the loss and grief it may bring her.

Interestingly, these two groups of people are often strongly attracted to each other because the dynamic they generate between them is high energy and "exciting". Let us just imagine Jamie and Sally starting an intimate relationship with each other.

What would this relationship look like? Sally needs closeness to stay calm and Jamie needs a lot of alone time to feel calm. Not an easy start, you would think

but really important to know neither Sally nor Jamie are wrong! The keys are:

- Listening and understanding each other.
- Being honest and authentic about our own needs.
- Setting clear boundaries and making clear agreements (as opposed to over-compromising, pleasing or being careless with our agreements and offering more than we are willing to).

It is often true that there is a fear while starting and being in an intimate relationship. Our fear of intimacy need not stop us, it's simply another aspect of our being that invites us to grow, to open in courage and trust in the goodness of life. So a really great way to start an intimate relationship is by sharing how scared you are to start an intimate relationship. Nothing is really more intimate than when Sally and Jamie share their fears of being close to each other. In a beautiful way, their relationship starts with opening their hearts to each other in listening and sharing to what is simply true for each of them.

To be intimate means we begin to reveal ourselves to another, and in doing so we make ourselves vulnerable to being hurt. That is inevitable but to avoid it, we avoid intimacy. As soon as we come close and open our hearts, we create the possibility that we might be hurt. So intimacy requires a deep trust – to some degree in the other but primarily a trust in ourselves. It is a trust that we will be okay and that we can let our hearts break open and live to love again. Intimacy is trusting that our hearts are bigger than our wounds. It is scary but worth it.

Jan Day is doing a series of different workshops in the coming months from the one day Intro To Living Tantra at Alternatives in London on Dec 1st to Passion, Power and Love, five days at New Year  
See page 9. Info [janday.com](http://janday.com)