

What is Tantra?

Is it all about sex? Is it about meditation? Or consciousness? Is it a way to God? Or techniques to have great orgasms? Depending on where you look, you can find a 'yes' to any of these questions. However, saying tantra is all about sex – which so many magazines seem to do - is like saying yoga is all about stretching.

Although tantra originated in India more than 2000 years ago, contemporary tantra is a path to bliss, a way to touch the Divine and feel One-ness. It's a path of spiritual growth and development that embraces both our human journey and the transcendental. Tantra has been defined as the 'weaving together of all that is'. What that means is that everything can be brought to this path of growth, including the natural sexual energies of our body, our heart energy, our mind and our soul. At last, there is a spiritual path where our sexual energies, love life and daily life are not separate. Nothing is taboo and everything can be brought to the path. At last the fullness of our being can be celebrated in all its aspects. And so tantra leads to an enriched and expanded way of living.

The focus on bringing consciousness to ALL is fundamentally important. For most of us, society's sexual taboo has been the cause of a great deal of un-consciousness in how we approach and live our sexuality. This, in turn, has led to the painful separation of sex, heart and spirit that manifests so clearly in so many unfulfilled and difficult relationships. On a tantric path, our intention is to bring consciousness to everything (not just sex).

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So how can we start to bring tantra into our everyday lives and what would the effects be? We can only start where we are, so we can begin by bringing conscious awareness to our own body - the energies and feelings that flow within it. Meditation practices support our growing awareness. Movement, breath and slowing down can support our shift out of 'auto-pilot' and into a developing conscious presence in our own body and being. So when we start to be 'at home' in ourselves, we come to know and befriend our own self. Self-acceptance, self-love and innocence develop, we then find we can live ourselves more fully with a greater sense of spaciousness and ease. Life becomes more vivid and wondrous. Eventually, blissful states of being can arise naturally as we celebrate our connection both with ourselves and with all that is.

In a tantra class or training, such as Living Tantra, such developments are encouraged and explored by working with the body in dance and physical touch in small groups. We learn to identify what we want and what we don't want, then to express it clearly. Feelings naturally arise as the body is activated. We learn to soften into our vulnerability and open to and befriend all that we are feeling as an alternative to the often defensive reactions of our 'auto-pilot'. This gives us a deep inner 'YES' to ourselves, a 'yes' that flows from the heart and nourishes us on the inside first. The inner 'YES' is a willingness to BE here fully, and it opens the door to deep connection with others, to nature, to the world and to that which is beyond this world. It leads to a natural state of being in love, where we know we are not separate - a state of blissful union which is what we all yearn for.

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Our daily practice is to practice bringing consciousness and love to everything. We might specifically practice bringing attention to our breath and slowing down so that we can be totally present. We might practise making love consciously where we connect to our heart and letting go of goals or of getting somewhere other than right here, right now. That way we can invite the sacred into everything we do. A walk in the park becomes sacred, preparing food becomes sacred, work becomes sacred. And life becomes blissful.

Jan Day leads an 18-month Living Tantra workshop series and training starting at Easter each year and a full range of tantra workshops for all levels of experience. For more info www.janday.com or call 020-8123 9831.

