

# Conscious SEXUALITY

**Rose Rouse** investigates a cutting-edge approach to sexuality and asks if it's the next big thing in emotional intimacy

**There's an excitement in the air about conscious sexuality. It's not tantra – with all its wafty spiritual connotations and Sting-like misunderstandings – it's a new way of being.** "Conscious sexuality is cutting edge," says relationship expert and intimacy coach Jan Day. "It's a willingness to explore the new rather than depending on existing limitations or guidelines given to us by outside authorities. For instance, what's expected 'normally' in society like closing your eyes and getting on with it. It's instead an intention and willingness to bring conscious awareness to our experience, communications and the outcomes of our sexuality. It's the opposite of being on auto-pilot. It's a developed state of sexuality that is heart-centred and 'we-centred' as opposed to 'me-centred', and that we can take multiple perspectives, in other words, see the different angles of something rather than just one's own needs and wants."

So how did conscious sexuality evolve? "There is a lot of overlap with tantra, especially Western tantra which was largely influenced by the Indian mystic and philosopher Osho but tantra has Eastern traditional spirituality at its core," says Jan, "whereas conscious sexuality is more rooted in Western thought, philosophy and psychology. It isn't limited to having to be part of any spiritual path. Someone could be interested in developing deeply meaningful relationships which could be sexually and socially conscious, and could be entirely secular or humanistic."



To be honest, there is such a huge need for conscious sexuality that, thank goodness, it is emerging as a way of approaching sexuality, not just for individuals but for society too. In fact, the misuse of sex – whether via abuse, porn or inappropriate adverts – has drawn attention to what is missing and therefore what is needed. “Conscious sexuality is a response to the unconscious, and to the sexual revolution that opened everything up in the 60s,” she adds.

### Complete awareness

Another difference to tantra – or the way tantra is often interpreted, in a celebratory way for example, is that conscious sexuality invites us to bring awareness to whatever is uncomfortable as well whatever is comfortable in sex. In other words, if we as partners give ourselves the time to really sit with our what we’re feeling when we’re engaged in sexual activity, then it can lead us to a deeper emotional intimacy and experience with each other. “The emphasis is on being conscious,” says Jan. “That means bringing awareness to the flow of feelings and energies within ourselves, bringing awareness to old unconscious patterns that are often there to protect us – and then with that sensitivity, being aware also of the one that we are with, feeling and sensing them as well.

So this is a new way of being with each other that opens us up to deeper vulnerability and a willingness to face and embrace whatever emerges in the course being there together and making love sexually. It requires us to have ways of tuning into ourselves, listening to ourselves and being willing to communicate transparently even when that may evoke feelings in our partner. So we end up with a more whole sexual connection as opposed to what David Schnarch in *Passionate Marriage* (W. W. Norton & Co) calls ‘the leftovers’. In conscious sexuality, we have the possibility to love each other more deeply because we are seeing each other more fully.”

So are you and your husband Frieder sexually conscious in your relationship I ask and what does this look like? “It means we’re committed to being honest and transparent in our communications,” she explains, “and are

willing to take time to connect on all levels with each other and with ourselves. Our sexuality is often slow and can take lots of time, but is not goal driven. Presence is important to both of us. We try out different ways of making love, rather than creating a routine and a specific way of doing it that would become repetitive. We have a lot of eye contact and we include the whole body rather than just genital stimulation. There is little focus on the excitement aspect of sexuality. I can say that every time is different, that there are highs and lows in energy, that the energy of care and love for each other permeates our love making, and while I’m aware of my own sexual nature, it’s not driving my behaviour, it’s just a delicious energy that flows in my body.”

### Different viewpoint

I wonder what the first steps are to being sexually conscious with a partner? “First of all,” she says, “practice listening to one another. One speaks and the other feeds back until the first

one is sure they have understood. Not parrot-like but really trying to put yourself in your partner’s shoes and understand and see what the world looks like from over there. Once that is established, you can start using this method to talk about your experiences during making love. Then, it’s good to practice touching each other one at a time, and giving feedback to learn what each other likes. Give the feedback in a simple way – ‘yes’, ‘no’, etc, and you can show each other what you like. During this you can also give a stream of awareness... ‘I’m feeling... I’m sensing... I’m thinking’, and so on. Finally, it’s great to create a ritual area where you pay attention to the space that you’ll be making love in by agreeing to remove anything distracting; creating beauty with flowers, candles, scents, sounds and an ambience that supports your commitment to stay there physically, emotionally and mentally. Then fully enjoy it.”

I don’t know about you but I’ve been waiting for something like this to come along and I’m more than ready to start...

Find out more  
*Jan Day is running an Intimacy and Spirit workshop from 24 August to 4 September on La Gomera in the Canaries. Visit [janday.com](http://janday.com) or call 0208 123 9831*

### How to...

## Start On The Sexually Conscious Journey

- ♥ Make an agreement that you both want conscious sexuality, discuss why and explore a vision that draws you forward.
- ♥ Learn to communicate clearly and compassionately. Sexuality is a major trigger for most people so often couples avoid talking about the difficult bits and rather resort to faking, pleasing and zoning out. We forget that it’s this communication that allows us to love more fully in a sexual sense.
- ♥ Set aside some time for sharing your feelings about sex with. Be honest and non-judgemental.
- ♥ Learn about each other’s bodies. Share how you like to be touched.
- ♥ Establish trust in sharing difficult feelings.
- ♥ Sexual healing practices like lingam and yoni massage are good to release tension and memories held in the body and can help change programmed responses to sexual stimulation.
- ♥ Identify existing patterns in your sexual behaviour and break out. For instance, try out a new time of the day or place. Be creative.
- ♥ Set aside time to practice. Trying new things means trying out and you won’t always be in the flow. This is development time.
- ♥ Think about ways of awakening your senses – use a blindfold, different sounds or silence, feed each other fruit, try different types of touch.
- ♥ Spend time breathing together to open and to give space for feelings to arise and flow.