

Would you like to have a Conscious Relationship?

by Rose Rouse

There's a buzz around conscious relating, but what does it really mean and how do you include it in your own life? Jan Day is one of the UK's top conscious relationship teachers and holds regular workshops, which include ways to develop your own conscious relating. "You will be invited to see yourself more clearly in the ways that you relate and to explore being more honest, transparent and authentic so that your relationships can be richer, deeper and more fulfilling. When we can bring ourselves more transparently and consciously into all our relationships we really learn what love means," she explains. "Conscious relationships include all the uncomfortable emotional places as well as the lighter, more joyful ones. When you are seen and witnessed in such a way, you can really be intimate."

Day uses all sorts of physical exercises so that participants can practice and become more aware of their behavior when relating. In one of them, she gets men and women to pair up (it is open to singles and couples) and simply stand opposite one another with their eyes in contact, then walk towards one another, stopping and starting at the same time as taking in how they feel at each particular juncture. "I was so out of my comfort zone doing this," says K, a psychotherapist who decided to do a weekend with her new partner. "I could have done it easily with a stranger, but with a man I'm having a relationship with, it was incredibly hard. It was so hard not to run away. I felt very anxious the closer I got to him. So in this exercise I learnt that I could walk away when I was ready. It was all about being separate and together, and the relationship between the two."

There's also lots of boundary work so that participants find out more about what they want and don't want. Being able to say 'No' to what you don't want is a key to saying 'Yes' to what you do want. You can trust yourself when you can say 'No' and so can others. "They do simple touch exercises where they give each other loving touch," explains Jan, "and they have to be clear about where they don't want to be touched, and also who can touch them where. For instance, a woman might say to a man that she feels distrustful of, that he can only touch her hands. This is fantastic practice in knowing what you want."

One exercise that many participants seem to have found extremely useful is one where you bring a difficulty in the relationship into a conversation between the protagonists. "You go on speaking until you feel heard," says K. "It's hell to do but very useful ultimately. I did it with my new partner and I was committed to really hearing and feeling what he was saying. But it was a challenge. It felt very valu-

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able for him too to be heard by this high level of listening. It was moving and I felt it gave us a deeper understanding of each other.

At the end, we both committed to being open to this relationship despite our anxieties. That felt incredibly good.”

J felt that her relationship with D was collapsing before the workshop. “It felt like everything was heavy and serious, and that we weren’t having any fun,” she says, “D was experiencing anxiety, I was down.” What helped? “The listening exercises,” she says, “when he heard that I was down, he was able to say that he felt upset that he hadn’t been able to protect me. I learnt that I was fighting with him but I’d forget I was also vulnerable. I realized I was putting stuff on him, when I could simply stay with my feelings and that would be more useful.”

Not only that, J and D improved their sex life by embracing their difficult feelings. “By allowing space for the problems and hearing each other, afterwards our love-making was phenomenal. Before we hadn’t really been present, now we were so present, we had a beautiful time together where we exchanged in a fantastic way. I really felt the intelligence of his cock saying to me, I want to be lighter. For both of us, it felt as if we were making love with God.”

Day says everything is possible in relationship if you are willing to go there. “Conscious relating demands time, effort and focus, it’s not wishy-washy,” she says, “it’s a way of really getting closer. The communication and the allowing of difficult emotions are the keys.”

*Janday.com The Living Tantra 1 Seven day workshop
runs from October 31st to November 7th
at Florence House in Sussex.*

*Inviting Intimacy, Brighton, 3-5 October
Conscious Relationships Weekend, Bristol, 10-12 October
Passion, Power & Love, Somerset, 28 Dec – 2 Jan*