

CONSCIOUS SEXUALITY

by Rose Rouse

There's a buzz in the air about conscious sexuality. This is a cutting edge evolution, a stepping into sexuality with a brave new kind of awareness.

So what is the definition of conscious sexuality? "It is a willingness and intention to bring conscious awareness to our experience, intentions, communications and the outcomes of our sexuality. It means we're feeling and sensing and sensitive to all that happens before, during and after our sexual encounters," says top UK tantra teacher and intimacy coach, Jan Day. "It's the opposite of being on auto-pilot and having an instinctual knee-jerk response to our sexual impulses. It is a developed state of sexuality that is heart-centred and 'we-centred' as opposed to 'me-centred', and that can take multiple perspectives. In other words, to see the different angles rather than just my own needs and wants."

Conscious sexuality is different to tantra because it's not part of an eastern spiritual path. However, it is influenced by the teachings of Indian mystic and philosopher, Osho – who is responsible for the development of neo-tantra in the West, in that he encouraged the exploration of sexuality as a tool for growth. Conscious Sexuality is more rooted in western thought, psychology, philosophy and the personal development movement. It is secular. "Someone could be interested in developing deeply meaningful relationships, could be sexually and socially conscious, and could be entirely secular or humanistic," explains Jan. "Conscious sexuality is a response to unconscious sexuality and to the sexual revolution that opened up sexuality."

Practising conscious sexuality 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 also with a similar sensitivity, being aware as well of your partner and feeling and sensing them too. "Then being willing to be with all that is touched in the dance that is between them," says Jan, "so there is a being with everything that emerges. You're stepping out of auto-pilot which can be very scary. So this is a new way of being with each other that opens us to a deeper vulnerability and a willingness to face and embrace whatever emerges in the course of our being together and making love sexually. Conscious sexuality 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 Snarch in *Passionate Marriage* called 'the left overs'. In conscious sexuality, we become more transparent with each other, and so we are more vulnerable and more raw, real and therefore have the possibility to actually love each other more deeply because we are seeing each other more fully."

What does conscious sexuality look like in a relationship? "I practice it in my own marriage," says Jan, "it means we're committed to being honest, transparent in our communications, and are willing to take time to connect on all levels with each other and with ourselves. Our sexuality is often slow and is not goal driven. We try out different

ways of making love, rather than creating a routine. We include the whole body rather than just genital stimulation. There is little focus on the excitement aspect of sexuality, there are highs and lows in energy and the energy of care and love for each other permeates our lovemaking. And while I'm aware of my sexual nature, it's not driving my behaviour, it's just a delicious energy that flows in my body."

There are all sort of reasons for wanting to become sexually conscious – healing sexual blocks and shut down sexuality, because it leads to a deeper intimacy with your sexual partner, it leads to a level of self love, inner ease and aliveness that is wonderful, it creates deeper connection, builds trust and allows us to feel more whole.

One of the first exercises that Jan recommends for budding sexually conscious partners is to really learn to listen to each other with a special caring quality. First, one person speaks and the other feeds it back until the first one is sure they have understood in a way that really is trying to put yourself in your partner's shoes. "Once this is established," she says, "then you can start talking about your experience during lovemaking with the same quality of listening."

Another useful exercise is touching each other one at a time and giving each other feedback in order to learn what each of you likes. "You can also show each other what you like," she says, "and you can also give a stream of awareness... 'I'm feeling...I'm sensing...I'm thinking.'"

Six ways to start being sexually consciousness

- 1) Make an agreement that you both want to be sexually conscious and share the vision of it.
- 2) So much doesn't get talked about in couples re their sex lives, so start to really communicate in a clear and compassionate way. Committing to honesty in this area is really important.
- 3) Set time aside to explore your feelings about sex. This could be done alone and together. Get to know each other and yourselves in this way.
- 4) Sexual healing practises like lingam and yoni massage are good to release tension held in the body musculature as stored body memories and can help change programmed responses to sexual stimulation.
- 5) Identify existing patterns in your sexuality and then get creative and break out of that routine.
- 6) Practice awakening more of the senses – like feeding each other fruit with a blindfold or sitting and touching each other in silence.

Enjoy starting to become more sexually conscious....

Jan Day is running a workshop called Sex and Spirit on La Gomera this summer with psychotherapist and author of *Courage To Love*, Malcolm Stern from Aug 24th to Sept 4th. More information about her workshops and individual coaching can be found on janday.com or contact her on jan@janday.com or call her for a chat on 020 8123 9831. *See page 10*