

Everyday Tantra

Practical ways to bring Tantra into your life, by Jan Day

Tantra is a richer and more expanded way of living. What this meant 2,500 years ago in India - and is still true today - is that rather than throw out certain aspects of life as being sinful or taboo we can use everything as a way to increase consciousness and as a tool for growth.

For many people, the connection between our sexual nature, our heart and our soul has been broken. This manifests in them being unable to be sexual with a person they deeply love, or unable to deeply love a partner with whom they have a strong sexual connection. But sexual energy is a powerful and fundamental aspect of our life as human beings. To be able to bring consciousness and presence to sexuality is transformational and affects every aspect of life. We can do this through simple, everyday Tantra.

Body, mind, soul

What we want to develop is an embodied connection with our own body and the energies that flow within it, including sexual energy. We can develop this connection through dance, touch, breath-work and working with practices such as bio-energetics to release tension and any 'holding on' from within the body.

Connecting with our body also leads us to connect with the feelings and sexual energies that flow within us. We can also develop a better relationship with our emotions and our heart by consciously taking on board what we need in these areas. This means learning to recognise what we're feeling and allowing ourselves to be friendly with whatever feelings arise. This way, we can allow emotional energy to flow through us and to flow into the heart. For some, this means letting go of the excitement of drama (whether that's the drama of getting upset, or the drama of sexual excitement) and instead letting ourselves 'simply be'. For others, it means being willing to open up to feelings that have been shut down because they are so painful. Until we can become comfortable, easy and spacious with our feelings, and allow them to flow through us, we can't connect with another person fully.

Conscious presence

As in most wisdom traditions from the East, meditation is a fundamental practice for developing awareness and higher states of consciousness. Different meditation practices suit different people. Some of the more advanced practices used in Tantra involve transmutation of energies and accessing altered states of consciousness. But we're starting at the beginning so basic meditation practices such as mindfulness or sitting and bringing awareness to the breath are foundation stones. Devotional practices such as Kirtan, or using a mantra, can be helpful too. The point is to develop an ability to stay present and 'be with'. Meditation means 'being with', so if we are sitting, we are being with the breath. If we are chanting a mantra, we are being totally with that mantra and it's call to the sacred. If we are doing a dynamic practice, we are with the body. It's our totality and presence that is called for.

Connection with spirit

The essence of Tantra is to bring the sacred into everything. The aim is to weave together all aspects of life so we can see God (or the Beloved, Spirit, whatever word you are comfortable with) in everyone and in everything. You can practice this by seeing all of creation, including yourself as a manifestation of the Beloved. Simply bringing your mind to the recognition of that, even if you don't believe it, can begin the exploration.

Of course, there are times when this is easier, and perhaps that is partly why our ancestors built such stunning temples, churches and cathedrals. The beauty and wonder of nature inspires people to feel their connection with source. Most of us have had moments when we've experienced something beyond ourselves. It is these moments that may dissolve the boundary between our limited individual self and the infinite. They may be dismissed, and yet most of us have had experiences of being 'one with all that is', connected beyond our small selves. These moments can be our guiding light: peak experiences in which we glimpse the truth of oneness.

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Tantric sexuality

Sexuality is an area that often gets ignored but Tantra allows us to shine a light in a celebratory way. The most significant aspect is taking the time to get to know your sexuality better. This offers a wonderful opportunity to consciously connect body, feelings, heart and the sacred. And this is something for all, regardless of their present relationship status.

For couples: Set aside some time to 'be with' each other totally. Create a space where it is easier to step out of daily life, so even the way you enter the space and create the environment encourages presence. Allow yourselves to move slowly in an intimate meeting, pleasuring each other in turn, allowing yourself to give totally and then receive totally, seeing the Goddess/Shakti in her, seeing the God/Shiva in him.

For singles: When you next go on a date, be willing to step into the unknown. This means, letting yourself be open and curious, allowing yourself into that space in which you can discover, as if each moment was the first in existence. No goals. Let the date unfold like a long walk in which you don't know where you're going or for how long or how far. (Note: this doesn't mean taking risks or ignoring your personal safety). Look through the masks your date is wearing and see the God or Goddess beyond it all, see the beauty that they are.



Developing the heart muscles

Here are some practical tips to bring Tantra into your everyday life:

- Develop a practice of self-listening and breathing into spaciousness; using breath to invite a spaciousness in which we can soften.
- Use the breath to slow down and listen during times of conflict. This enables us to be with what we would normally avoid or move away from. We're learning to 'lean in' instead of 'lean out' and that can bring love instead of fear to difficult situations.
- Use the 'morning pages' exercise. Take a notebook and write as fast as you can, allowing your mind to empty onto the page without censoring or judging. Write every morning, then put the book down and move on with your day.
- Forgiveness meditation practice: use meditation to find the willingness to release ourselves from the prison of old resentments and a closed heart.
- Be willing to stay alive, present and feeling while we are connected to our sexuality. This brings intimacy to sexuality and begins to undo the separation between sex and heart.
- Pay attention to the ways we close down. When we find ourselves in the blame game we can be aware we're being invited to see more perspectives.

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