

# Check your connection

As 2022 beckons with open arms, reflect, reach out and rekindle attachments with yourself and those you love, writes the relationship expert Jan Day

**T**he new year is a powerful window in the midst of winter to take stock of your life. It's a natural pause, a time of slowness as the changing year symbolises new beginnings. No matter what you find when you look back, cultivating an attitude of learning from experience makes transformation and growth possible. It's not about what happened so much as how you understand and work with it, how you give it meaning and how you integrate it into your being.

So what does that look like in practical terms? The aim is to open yourself to connection on all the following levels:

- 1 Your body and the sensations and energies that flow in it**
- 2 Your gut and heart – the feeling and emotional life within you**
- 3 Your mind – the ideas, beliefs, and narratives you carry, conscious and unconscious**
- 4 Your soul – your connection beyond your physical body**

One of the most important ways people connect with each other is through touch. It is crucial to our relationships and our sense of wellbeing, a point brought painfully home to us during the pandemic. Recent research shows that small everyday touch, such as a tap on the shoulder, can positively affect the way we feel and act – and even robots can provide this nourishment!

This physical contact can have an impact on our care and compassion for others too. Many people reported that

they felt far less connected with other people when they were instructed to keep a strict distance from them, and when so many normal, everyday conversations suddenly took place behind screens – either plastic ones in the real world or electronic ones online.

Now that restrictions are happily much eased, it's worth spending time reconnecting with the physical world and getting back in touch, quite literally,

*“Spend time with the physical world and get back in touch”*

with ourselves and the people we love.

You can develop this state of presence by balancing the energies of body, heart and mind, developing sensitivity by listening to them. Whether you are making love, choosing fruits and vegetables at the market, gazing into your pet's eyes or walking in the woods, you can tune into your body and feel the flow of simply being alive. This is a way of life for every day, which gives us access to joy and the beauty of life in each moment.

Start by focusing on your relationship with your physical body and notice what happens when you touch your body in a nurturing way. What happens when you bring focused attention to each area of your body? This is a good moment to give the exercise below a go...

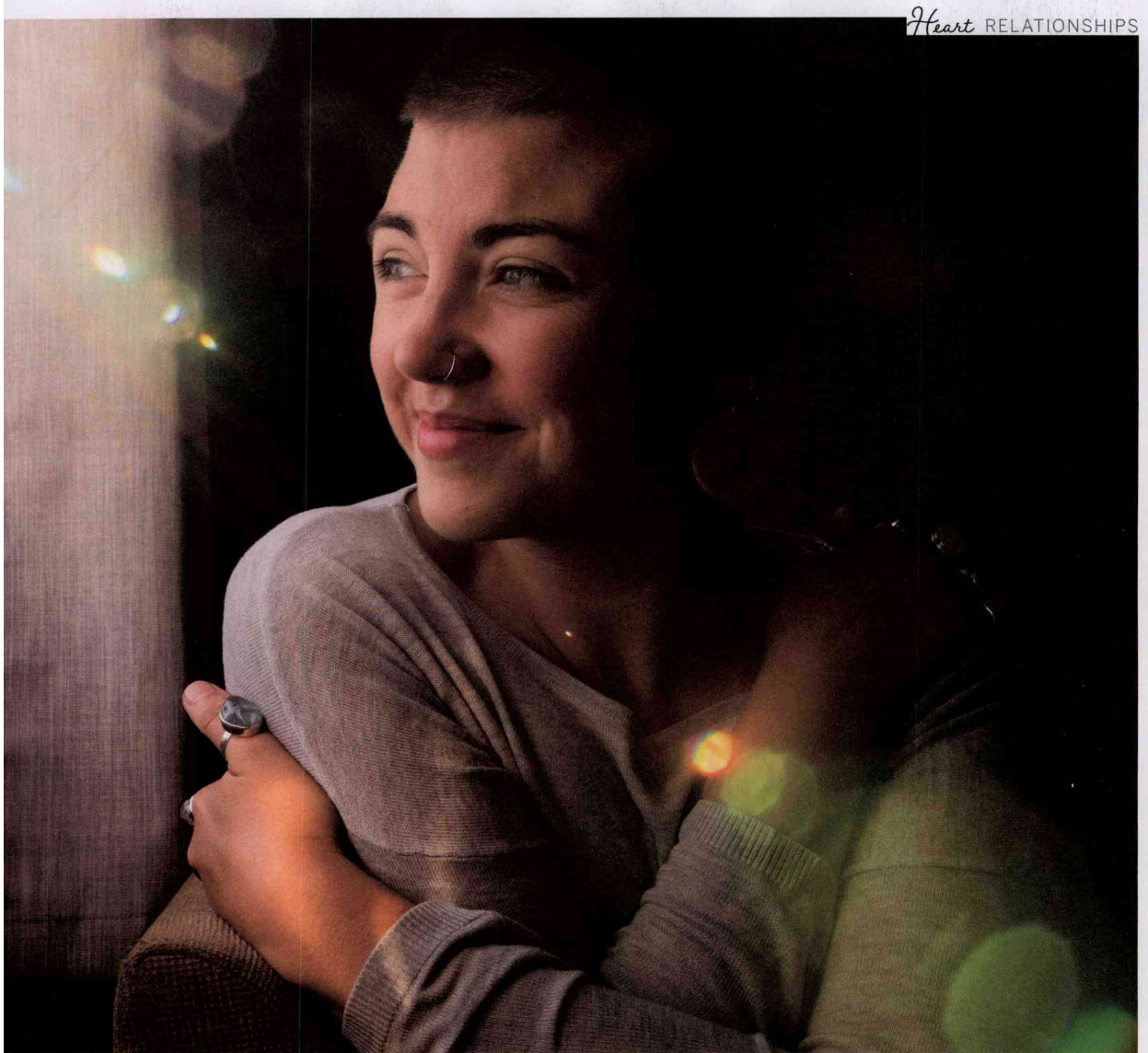
## EXERCISE: *Connect with yourself*

Lie or sit comfortably and put your arms around yourself. Hold yourself as if you were cradling a small child who is in pain. Use your hands to soothe and stroke yourself. Breathe slowly and imagine directing your breath under your hands.

Gradually allow your hands to move over your body, sensing what feels good. You may find yourself stroking your face or putting your hands on your heart, running your fingers through your hair or exploring your hand as if you had

never seen one before. Give yourself the fullest attention you can. Notice what you are feeling, moment by moment, using your breath to bring focus to the different areas of your body. Open and close your eyes. Notice if you can be more present with eyes open or closed. Notice any thoughts that arise. End as you began by holding yourself, and find some encouraging words for yourself.

Make notes about the experience. How did you feel about doing it? How did you feel afterwards?



Heart RELATIONSHIPS

## Connect with others

When you feel like moving on from how you hold yourself, it's worth thinking about how touch plays a part in our relationships. In a romantic relationship, whether you have been together five months or 30 years, exploring physical touch is always a way to develop your bond.

It is easier initially to take turns to give or receive touch, rather than trying to do both at the same time. Agreeing to voice a simple yes or no to whatever touch you are receiving

is a way of learning and becoming more embodied together. You'll discover renewed trust in yourself and your partner as you realise that you can simply say yes or no to touch. You will also be rewriting any narrative that says that no means you are bad, won't be liked or are unworthy, or that you have to endure touch that you don't enjoy.

When this safety of communication is in place, you'll discover deepening pleasure and sensuality in touch.

### CASE STUDY

Peter, a 50-year-old creative professional, had cut himself off from the joy of touch because he felt a division between body and soul in his Christian faith.

He feared that his sexual self was inherently harmful or dangerous, and that he could be led into sin. Through slowly exploring touch, boundaries and consent, allowing sensual pleasure and learning to fully inhabit his body and natural energies, he discovered an inherent trust in his wholeness.





## Connect with your mind

We run all kinds of narratives to make sense of our lives. Some involve a sense of entitlement or holding on to a grievance about how unfair life is. You can connect with the power of your mind to explore different outcomes using this exercise...

### EXERCISE:

#### *Connect with the past*

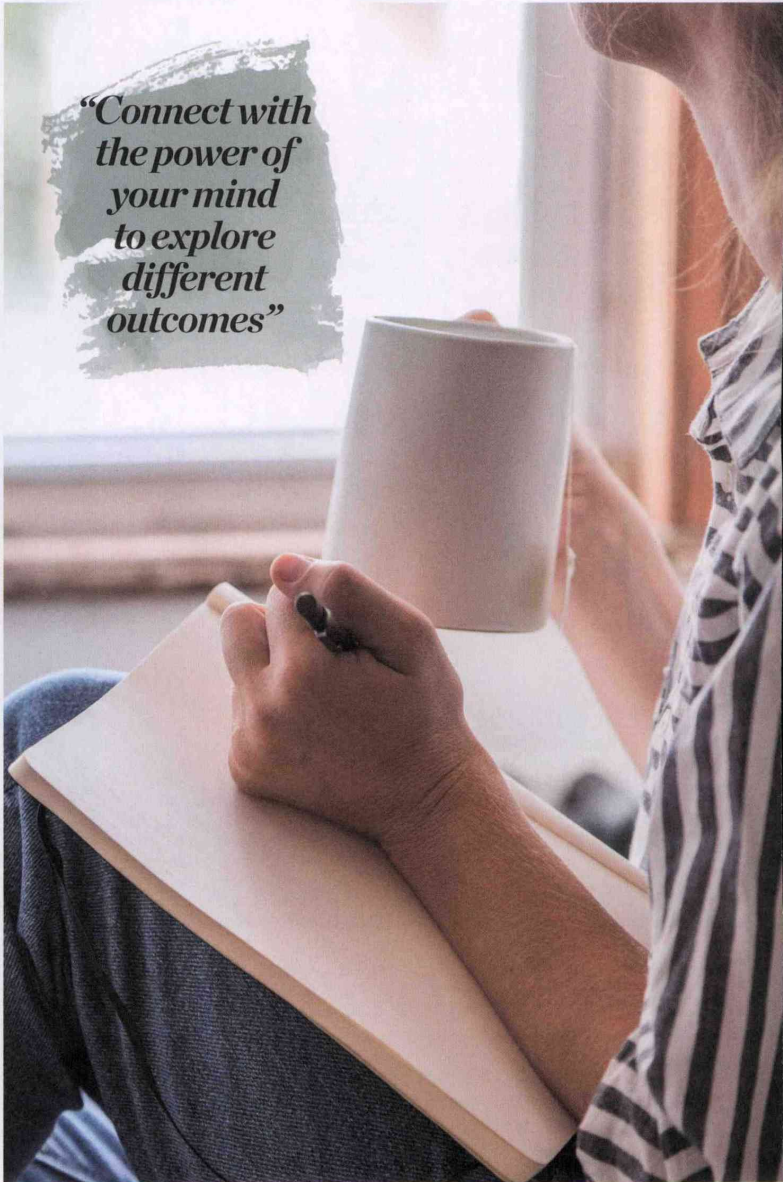
Choose one situation where you are not getting the outcome you want. Run through it in your mind or write it down in a notebook in the present tense so you are reliving what actually happened (in your perception).

Don't get caught up in truth or not truth. If you think it happened, it will be affecting you whether it actually happened that way or not. When you have explored your perceived reality, imagine that you can change it so that it happened just the way you would have liked – you get as many attempts to rewrite history as you want.

It can be helpful to imagine that a fairy godmother sprinkled fairy dust on the whole scene, because it gives you permission to allow yourself a different experience in your imagination. Make sure that you stay connected with your body and your feelings as you recreate the experience the way you want it.

At the end, notice what resources you got from reliving that experience differently. You may have realisations about yourself or your beliefs. Be curious. Notice in the following days if you approach life differently.

In connecting with your body, your sexual centre, the feelings in your gut and heart, and the stories and meaning you create with your mind – and allowing all those threads to weave together – your capacity for joy, pleasure and sensuality will expand and happiness will arise naturally, rather than simply being a goal.



*“Connect with the power of your mind to explore different outcomes”*

### ▶▶▶ NEXT STEPS

**Read** *Living Tantra: A Journey Into Sex, Spirit And Relationship* by Jan Day ([Watkins](#), £12.99) explores how the ancient spiritual practice of Tantra can be applied in our modern world.