6 Ways to Have Radically Intimate Sex

Plus:
A Practical Guide to Yab Yum: A Tantric Partner Meditation

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“Sometimes I get real lonely sleeping with you.”

Haruki Murakami, A Wild Sheep Chase

We want intimacy and avoid sex. Or we fear intimacy and crave sex. There is a pervasive confusion about sex and intimacy. We use the words interchangeably, but purely physical intimacy stops way short of a meaningful experience or a sustainable connection. The more we focus on the physicality of sex—how we look, what we wear, toys and techniques—the further we get from true intimacy.

Here are my six suggestions for having radically intimate sex...

1. **Shhhhh: No Talking**

Often when we think of intimacy, we think about the sharing of secrets. There is something intimate about verbalizing our innermost thoughts and desires—especially when it comes to sex. However, as alluring as fantasy can be, by its very definition, it’s a way of escaping reality. And we tend to hide behind our words, using conversation as a means of avoiding vulnerability. We tell people who we are instead of showing them. True intimacy with a lover happens in the silent moments of presence and connectedness between words.

**PRACTICE #1**

Set a specific time to meet in the bedroom without speaking a single word. Spend an hour together, not talking, before any physical intimacy begins. Show up clean—physically and emotionally. This is an opportunity to let our stories fall away—as individuals and as a couple—making room for a deep, non-verbal, energetic connection.
When Emerson said, “Life a journey, not a destination” he meant that when we focus on getting to a particular goal, we miss value in the moments along the way. And so it is with sex. There are reports that women can have 11 different kinds of orgasms. From the time men are boys, they are fascinated with ejaculating (it’s a built-in, biological preoccupation on which the survival of the species depends!) We have misunderstood the destination of sex to be orgasm, and by doing so, robbed ourselves of some potentially powerful opportunities for both pleasure and intimacy.

PRACTICE #2
Agree upfront to forgo reaching orgasm. Take the possibility completely off the table, for both of you. By doing so, you provide space to be present and find appreciation of each moment for the pleasure and connection it brings, without distraction. Take turns bringing each other close and backing off. Notice the powerful bond created as you hold each other on the brink of ecstasy.

Like a Lava Lamp: Slow It Way Down

We live in a fast-paced, over-stimulating, 140-character-status-update kind of world. As a culture, we are usually focused on “doing” rather than “being.” Because we juggle so many responsibilities, sex tends to become just another thing on the “To Do List.” Rushing through the “doing of sex” does not encourage the “being” of intimacy.

PRACTICE #3
Create a bubble of time and space to climb into together. Do whatever it takes to enable getting lost in your own world together. Make a conscious decision not to rush. Let energy flow between you like a lava lamp. Moving verrrry slowly, savor each moment of sensation and allow intimacy to rise.

We have misunderstood the the destination of sex to be orgasm...

Sealed with a Kiss: Undress Each Other

Whether it’s your first time together, or you’ve been having sex for 30 years, giving your body to your lover is a gift. To receive your partner’s body is a privilege. Don’t let modesty or habit stop you from honoring this generous exchange.

PRACTICE #4
This practice is most comfortable done with the lights dimmed or by candlelight. Undress each other by taking turns removing one article of clothing at a time. As each piece comes off, gently kiss the part of the body revealed in gratitude.
It is a technique in meditation to turn the focus from thoughts to the breath. In Tantra, partners will “match breath” as a way of forming an energetic connection that is not based on the giving and receiving of physical pleasure.

**PRACTICE #5**

Begin in a simple embrace. Spend a few minutes slowing and synchronizing your breath. Silently negotiate a rhythm that is comfortable for both of you. Pause at the top of each inhale and at the bottom of each exhale, creating a moment of mutual stillness. Breathing together is facilitated by cooperation and consideration for each other. Try to maintain this collaboration as sex unfolds.

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Eye contact is a distinct point of connection. Yet, it is common to keep one’s eyes closed during sex. Extended eye contact reveals vulnerability, and so it can be a powerful facilitator of intimacy.

**PRACTICE #6**

Sit on the floor facing each other and gaze into each other’s eyes without looking away for 20 minutes. Shifting from eye to eye helps sustain the gaze. Maintain eye contact as much as possible as sex unfolds. Play with looking into each other’s eyes all the way through orgasm. It is nearly impossible to climax with open eyes (like sneezing). Gazing into your lover’s eyes at the moment of release just might be the very definition of intimacy.
A Practical Guide to Yab Yum: A Tantric Partner Meditation

IN THE LAST COUPLE OF DECADES, the term Tantra has made its way into the pop culture lexicon. Thanks, in part, to a provocative (and drunken) 1993 Q magazine interview with Sting and Bob Geldof (Sting talks about it in a recent interview with The Guardian), there’s been a fascination with tantric sex, also commonly referred to as “sacred sex.” From an upscale restaurant and lounge in Miami’s South Beach, to a small hair salon in suburban Philadelphia, the allure of this mysterious practice is evident.

Tantra is a Sanskrit word, which translates roughly as “tool for stretching” or “instrument of expansion.” It is not a religion; there is no dogma, no institution. It is a practice; a way of being in the world. In spite of the hype, sex is merely one facet of this complex and esoteric, spiritual philosophy, which encompasses, the use of chakras (the energy centers of the body), mantra (Sanskrit chants), asana (yoga postures), pranayama (rhythmic breathing) and ritual ceremony to address concepts of the weaving of light and shadow, paradox, and reverence for the body as a pathway to the Divine. There have been many books written on the history, philosophy and practice of Tantra. To attempt to define or describe the various lineages, traditions, and rituals in this space, would be a gross simplification and an injustice to a beautifully rich and nuanced tradition. A lifetime could be spent studying and mastering Tantra. But in a world in which there continues to be a pervasive disconnection between spirituality and sexuality, it serves to look to this ancient practice to explore where the two might meet.
One of the most common Tantra practices is called “Yab Yum”, which translates as “Father Mother,” and leans on the energetic gender polarity of a man and woman as it manifests in sexual union (intercourse). The man sits with his legs crossed (Easy Pose or “Criss-Cross Applesauce”), and the woman sits facing him on his lap with her legs wrapped around his torso and lower back. Together, they represent Shiva and Shakti the complementary divine masculine and feminine energies.

If all of this is still sounding obscure and cryptic, well…it is. Part of the very essence of Tantra is that it works with that which cannot—and should not—be articulated. We live in a culture that worships the intellect. We process and rationalize emotions in an attempt to make our experience of life neat and tidy. In relationship, we define our needs and negotiate their fulfillment. All this is with good reason; most of us live fast-paced, hyper-stimulated, goal-oriented lives. We need to be able to contain our emotional life to reason our way through our busy day. But the byproduct of this is a separateness; an alienation—from ourselves, from each other, and ultimately from God (in whatever way you choose to describe it).

Ram Dass says, “The intellect is a beautiful servant but a terrible master. Intellect is the power tool of our separateness. The intuitive, compassionate heart is the doorway to our unity.” And in this spirit, a Yab Yum practice provides an opportunity to flip the paradigm and allow our energetic and emotional selves, our “compassionate hearts,” to express themselves, thereby cultivating integration in ourselves, and a connection with each other.

To begin a Yab Yum practice, I recommend moving through these three phases to cultivate a safe space and to encourage energetic intimacy to build slowly. Each “sit” should be 20 minutes long. Set a timer so that you can surrender all thoughts of time and space and get lost in the practice. Move to the next phase when it is mutually agreeable.

**PHASE I: STARTING KNEE-TO-KNEE**
Both partners sit in Easy Pose facing each other with knees gently touching. Place your hands on each other’s knees, or forearms. Gaze into each other’s eyes without looking away. Spend a few minutes slowing synchronizing your breath. Silently negotiate a rhythm that is comfortable for both of you. Pause at the top of each inhalation and at the bottom of each exhalation, creating a moment of mutual stillness. Notice what happens as you become more and more present to each other and to yourselves.

**PHASE II: SCOOCHING CLOSER**
Both partners open up their legs and the woman sits as close as she can to her partner, draping her legs over his and around his lower back. Place your hands on each other’s shoulders, or waist. Another option is to place one hand on each other’s heart. Match breath in the same way as Phase I. Notice what happens as you move closer and deepen the practice.

**PHASE III: CLIMBING INTO HIS LAP**
This is the classic Yab Yum position, and the first two phases primed the canvas for what happens now. The woman moves fully into her partner’s lap while he sits in Easy Pose. Begin face-to-face with foreheads touching and arms comfortably around each other. Eyes should be closed; the eye gazing is replaced by increased physical touch, while you continue to focus on the breath as the main point of connection. Notice the quality of the energy now. What does it feel like? Where in your body do you feel it? Let it move freely. Let your bodies embrace fully. At this point, the woman’s feminine energy; her creative life force; her kundalini; is rising. She is a vessel, a channel for the divine feminine in the form of sexual energy. The man’s role is to sit solidly in his masculinity and hold a container strong enough to support her as she allows it to overtake her, dissolving into bliss. As you dance with this energy between you, you many notice that your egos, your ideas about who you are, your personalities, have vanished. You are united as complementary aspects in the union of divine masculine and feminine, a fractal embodiment of the universe.
Whether you are using Yab Yum as a prelude to sex, or as a practice in and of itself, it is important to allow the natural and organic rise of sexual energy. Our typical idea of masculinity as an aggressive force which pursues, controls and conquers, doesn’t apply here. Kundalini energy (which is rooted in the sacrum, or base of the spine) can be shy. It cannot be coaxed by force. Imagine a snake curled up in a hole. Gently wake it and charm it from the woman’s sacrum, up the spine. Begin by using the timer to contain and pace the energy. As you become more and more adept at surrendering to each other, yourselves and the mystical divine connection, lose the timer and let the spirit carry you away.

Sometimes the feelings that arise are not at all sexual in nature. This practice has a way of making us feel seen in a way that we rarely do in the course of our daily lives. The safety of this space often opens the floodgates of pent up emotions, like sadness or shame. Allow whatever comes forth, without judgment. Welcome the opportunity to fall apart as someone holds a container for you. If your partner is moved by emotion, simply hold steady while they release their feelings. Resist the urge to comfort, which can encourage the containment or suppression of emotion. Being a compassionate witness can affect a deep healing, as well as a loving bond.

TIPS

**Eye Gazing.** It can be difficult to figure out where to fix your gaze. Try starting by focusing on the space between your partner’s eyes, or their “third eye.” As you relax into the practice, transfer your gaze to one of their eyes. Every so often switch to their other eye. You will relax into a rhythm that feels comfortable.

**Sitting.** Easy Pose is often challenging for men. Especially for a length of time with weight on top of them. The most common complaint is irritation of the ankle bones against the floor. Sitting on soft blanket or pillow will help. For men with especially tight hips, placing pillows under the knees to raise them slightly and ease the stretch. If it’s simply not possible for the man to sit, he can lie flat with the woman straddling him with their bodies perpendicular to each other. Bottom line: Use whatever pillows and props you need to make it work for you. Honor yourselves and each other by listening to and supporting your bodies in whatever way makes sense and feels good.

**Music.** Selected carefully, music can be a wonderful enhancement to a Yab Yum practice. Choose non-lyrical or purely instrumental, ambient music. Recognizable language will be counterproductive to the process of getting out of your heads and making a strong heart-based energetic connection.

**Same Sex Couples.** Although the mythology and symbolism of Yab Yum is gender-based, it is an equally great practice for same sex couples. Play with the masculine and feminine energies as they express themselves in the physical postures by alternating who sits on top. You may discover something new in the exploration of these dynamics in terms of how they show up between you and what they might offer in your partnership.