

Sex, Sin & The City by Nicholas de Castella

I run an Introduction Agency called Passionately Alive. I introduce people to themselves. I teach them how to be their own best friends. How to enter into relationship with themselves, how to connect with their own hearts first and then to connect with others.

You see most of us have lost touch with ourselves. We avoid being present with ourselves. Rarely do we sit in stillness, look inside and feel what we are feeling. Instead we live life 'on the go', rushing here and rushing there, preoccupied with thinking and not feeling. We don't taste what we are eating, don't really listen to what we are hearing, don't say what we are thinking and don't rest when we are tired.

But it is only when we are in relationship with ourselves that we can ever meet anyone else and only when we are in relationship with ourselves that we can discover our own spirituality.

Our cities are filled with people living in towers of isolation. We prostitute ourselves, selling our souls for fame and fortune, living lives that are spiritually bankrupt. Lives that often feel empty and meaningless.

In response to our loss of connection we often turn to sex in an attempt to fill the void of emptiness. In the process we tend to end up betraying our truth, selling ourselves short and feeling used and manipulated.

We have walled out our pain with shells of self protection and become trapped in lonely, empty cages of our minds, our senses dulled and our bodies numbed to feeling. Consequently, we tend to have either become: obsessively preoccupied with sexual distraction, or have lost our mo jo.

Some hump and pump, groan and strain in the hope of finding something deeper. Most only find themselves thrown up and marooned more painfully upon the rocks of their own desperation. Looking for respite elsewhere. Looking outside themselves to fill the void and dissatisfaction they feel within. So they Fuck from within the cage. Fucking in the cage does not get us out of the cage though it does blur the bars..... for a while.

Others close off their sexual passion, preferring to distract themselves in safer ways, retreating into the intellect, playing mind games, avoiding the possibility of further rejection and abuse. They withdraw into a world of their own. A mind generated world of fantasies and horrors. Here sexual experiences happen with videos or over the phone, no 'body' is required.

Sex can offer us some titillating relief from the drudgery and boredom of a dull life or it can be a vehicle for awakening a deeper connection to our true aliveness.

The difference is our attitude to sex.

Western Sexual Shame: Western Sexuality has been polluted by religious shame. Sexual shame creates a lot of confusion, embarrassment, tension and dysfunctional behaviour.

I was educated at a private Catholic boys school. My official sex education was taught by a Jesuit

Priest. Healthy Sexual expression and enjoyment was shamed. Sex was reduced to being of reproductive value only. The leaders of the church and school had renounced sex - at least publicly, that is. The message I received was 'To be spiritual is to be non sexual' .

But how did this shame come to be?

The Bible tells the story of the fall of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden - paradise on earth. How they ate from the tree of knowledge. We are told that the knowledge that they gained was not the knowing of facts and figures but the ability to know good and evil.

In the story we witness the introduction of the practise of dividing life into that which is good and that which is bad - the holy and sinful. It is not by coincidence that this cataclysmic split results in the subsequent departure from the paradise that Eden is. Upon digesting the apple Adam and Eve enter into their first experience of shame. They become ashamed of their sexuality and cover their genitals with fig leaves.

But Life does not have good and evil innate to it - It just 'is'.

Judging experiences into good and bad is an act of the mind. It involves the abstracting, generalising and categorising of experience. These are attributes that we impose onto our experiences. Good and Bad are a part of a fantasy world of our own mental creation, a figment of our imagination. Such judgments are ultimately personal and subjective. What we consider to be good and bad will vary from person to person and depends on such things as our past experiences, family and cultural values. Such judgments are not a reflection on life but on our sorrowful separation from life itself.

Judgments are a convenient way to operate for they save time and energy: "This is good sex" and "That is bad sex". But in fact there is no such thing as good sex or bad sex. There are sexual experiences in which we feel happy and alive and there are sexual experiences in which we feel sad, scared or frustrated.

Our attitude to sex will have a major impact on the kinds of sexual experiences we have. When we deem sex to be bad or evil our experience of it will inevitably be laced with guilt, shame, hurt, corruption and abuse.

Suffering and pain is caused not by sinning, but by the natural tendency to resist what we make wrong.

Whatever we judge as bad, wrong or sinful we will try to repress. When we resist what we are feeling the energy of that feeling cannot flow through our bodies freely. Instead this energy becomes knotted and blocked. It then either manifests in the body as pain or it is expressed indirectly.

The repression of sexual feelings does not lead to their elimination but rather to them being forced into shadowy hiding where they fester and grow. We act out these repressed feelings in distorted behaviours like going cold in a relationship, becoming bitchy, angry or violent.

The history of child sex abuse does not cast

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religious leaders (who are supposed to be both holy and abstain from sexual activity) as convincing evidence that repressive policies are the way to go.

Many repressed feelings are acted out sexually. Carl Jung stated that 'all addictions are substitutes for genuine feeling'. For example: the word 'Fuck' is used to express an incredible number of different feelings, (in fact, a fucking incredible number!)

For example: Ignorance - 'Fucked if I know!', Hostility - 'Fuck You', Surprise - 'Oh Fuck!', Desperation - 'For Fucks sake!', Excitement - 'You Fucking Bottler!', Repulsion - 'It was Fucken awful', Wonder - 'It was Fucking Amazing', Disappointment - 'It was really Fucked', Used - 'I got fucked over'

To call sex sinful is to practice spiritual abuse. To overlay shaming religious morality onto a natural expression of life is to invalidate the innate beauty and perfection of creation. It is ironic that sex has been degraded by the very institution that is supposed to teach the divinity of life.

Western Sexual shame creates tendencies for the repression of healthy sexual expression. When shamed our sexuality goes underground, covered by a thick layer of embarrassment. This embarrassment leads to an absence of healthy discussions about sex in our youth. This ignorance often leads us into situations where we don't know what's going on, leading to further embarrassment and shame.

Shame makes us want to hide and makes it difficult to stay in relationship. But sex without relationship tends to be like eating fairy floss: It looks great but tends to leave us feeling empty and unfulfilled.

Sexual shame creates restriction. It makes it hard for us to look in the eyes of our lover, scary for our body to be seen and touched, and difficult to for us to ask directly for what we like and to state emphatically what we don't.

Sexual Shame prohibits us realising the full potential that is available within our sexuality.

Tantric Sexuality: In stark contrast to Western shame based sexuality are the Eastern Tantric Sexual practices. These teach that sexuality is a sacred aspect of life. They teach sexuality as a pathway to deepening relationships, expanded states of awareness, and ecstatic states of aliveness.

Tantric practices view sexual energy as the creative life force, commonly called Kundalini energy. This energy is the prime mover of all action, it animates us and can be directed to create expanded states of awareness.

In Tantra, sex is treated with reverence (and playfulness). Accordingly, Tantric sexual experiences commonly engender a deep level of love and respect. In the Tantric tradition the man is recognised and treated as a divine incarnation of the male god 'Shiva' and the woman is recognised and treated as a divine incarnation of the female goddess 'Shakti'.

Most Tantric practises are not actually about sex, but rather about entering into relationship with ourselves and with the other.

Tantra encourages us to embrace what we are feeling without running away or splitting off. It is only when we stop and allow ourselves to feel what is happening for us that we heal and grow. It means saying Yes to Life, yes I will feel what I'm feeling, even if I am frightened and contracted. Staying open and allowing the natural unfolding of emotion to come through us allows it to shift. This open embrace is an act of loving of ourselves at a fundamental level, an honouring of the truth of our being.

In long term Tantric relationships it is common to enjoy fulfilling sex daily. But for this to occur we need to nurture and respect ourselves and our partners. This is achieved through creating a space of truth, honouring, vulnerability and trust. This opens us to an ever deepening experience of love that we both want to go back to.

This means being willing to reveal what we most fear and dislike about ourselves. Being willing to stand nakedly and vulnerably before the other, engaging open eyed, heart to heart in truth and love.

Sometimes we call this level of engagement 'Walking into the fire'. It involves committing to coming forward and expressing our frustrations and our fears, confronting issues that are distressing us, even if we think that it is going to disrupt the peace for a while. When we withhold our truth we tend to withdraw and then resent the other. This causes a diminishing of the connection and aliveness in ourselves and in each other. It seems that to have a good relationship, you have to be willing to risk the relationship.

Contrary to popular fears, when we engage, with responsibility, we actually strengthen the relationship: Forging it in the fire of truth: Building bridges across our separate shores. As we resolve important issues that inevitably arise in relationships, we move forwards together.

This level of engagement creates a passionate sex life. The great lovers of the world: the French, the Greeks and the Italians are all renowned for expressing their feelings passionately.

As we come to love our sexuality we have more wholesome and fun experiences. For example typical Western sexual activity usually happens at the end of the day when we are tired. Tantra encourages us to consciously set aside time to have sex when we are fresh and alive.

In conclusion: When we fully embrace our sexuality, our lives becomes more fun and playful. In sex we dance and weave with the energy of creation. We breath and surrender our bodies to the ecstasy that is life! We enjoy the flow of energy as it animates us. We experience more joy and ease, deepening relationships and hearts openings.

The greatest tragedy is, not that we are sinners, but that we have not been taught to lovingly embrace all of we are.