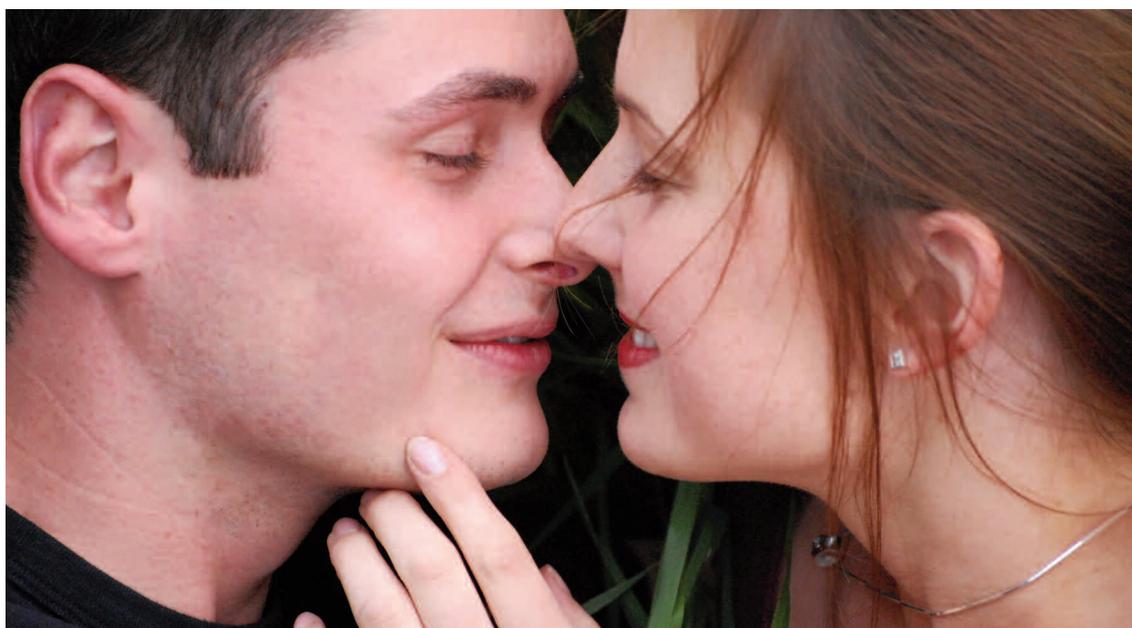


► Let's Talk Tantra

Certified sex therapist, Dr. Sally Valentine dispels the myths about tantric sex, and reveals practices that can be incorporated into the lives of any couple



MAYBE YOU'VE HEARD THE MUSICIAN

Sting speaking out about the practice or you happened to catch Oprah interviewing experts on it. Either way, odds are you've heard the term "tantric sex" at some point. But how many people actually understand what it is or how it's practiced?

Dr. Sally Valentine, a certified sex therapist and licensed clinical social worker based in Boca Raton, Fla., recently appeared on Energy Awareness Radio with host T Love to discuss the topic and shed light on this ancient practice.

"Tantra is the weaving of spirit and sex," Valentine says on her Web site, www.dr.sallyvalentine.com. "Through an awareness and consciousness of our energies, we are able to shift our energy throughout our bodies, which can enhance our depth of connection with ourselves and our partner."

The practice involves eye gazing and fully tapping into the five senses, she explains in the interview. It also involves breathwork, visualization and meditation.

Below is an excerpt from the show with Valentine. To listen to the full interview, visit www.blogtalkradio.com/energyawareness.



T Love: Can you tell us or define for us what tantric sex is?

Dr. Sally Valentine: I think it's hard to describe what tantra really is because you hear so many different definitions for it. The one that I like to use is that it's a spiritual path and through this we utilize specific practices with breath, sound, movement and visualization. All of this helps assist in quieting the mind and activating sexual energy, and it's directed through the body to bring a



*Dr. Sally Valentine,
certified sex
therapist*

greater sense of awareness and wellbeing, and a higher state of consciousness. People who engage in more conscious sexuality and sex are able to move to a space that is much deeper and richer in nature than the basic typical sex that we all kind of grew up with and know about ... to delineate tantric sex from ordinary sex would really be to me that tantric sex is conscious sex. So it's making love and being sexual in a very conscious and aware way rather than separating your mind and your body or disconnecting your body while you are being physically sexual, which lots of people do. It's really staying very attuned to your body and being consciously aware of how you are in every single moment as you're being sexual with your partner or by yourself.



Love: Do you find in your workshops there is a certain age group where it's more popular to learn this or does it span the generations?

Valentine: In my experience, I find a lot of middle age people are coming to the workshops ... I think people are more interested in it in that age group because younger people have so many other things going on in their lives that they are not wanting a spiritual experience in sex ... when you get into your 40s, you are moving into a whole new phase of life, and if you have a partner, you begin to look at each other, especially if it's been a long-term relationship, and you want to reinvest in sex. That is when they start to explore ... I think our souls are seeking reunion — the divine reunion — and I think in our lovemaking and our tantric practices we can help facilitate a deepening of coming back home.

Love: What are some of the tantric practices?

Valentine: Breathwork is one of the tantric practices, which is also done with anyone who practices yoga. Think about all the breathing and the yogic breath that you do — which is also tantric breath — the big abdominal breath in and allowing your stomach to drop back to its resting state as the air flows out. Also, in tantra we do nose breathing but also some mouth breathing where it

changes the energy within your body. Body movement is also important in terms of the sexual experience. Being able to undulate your body and move your hips, as well as taking care of your pelvic, sexual area with kegel exercises and ways you tighten and contract your pubococcygeus (PC) muscles so you are really taking care of your sexual health in that way ... all of this is part of honoring your body so you can experience more fully what life has to offer.

Love: How do people know if they are going to a workshop that is taught by someone with integrity, or a true tantra workshop?

Valentine: When people are wanting to know more about it or looking for teachers or workshops, they should ask very specific questions because some people are very shy around their body and they don't want to be in a workshop where they are asked to be naked, for example. Some people love it and that is the type of workshop they want, but some people don't, so those are the kinds of questions you want to ask if you're going to a tantra workshop. Ask the teacher, "Where did you learn it? How did you get into it? What happens in the workshop? Is there nudity? Is there sexual activity?" So the general public who knows nothing about it understands what they are signing up for ... I don't do nudity in my workshops; everybody is clothed and there isn't sexual activity in the workshops I offer. I have teaching tools but nothing is actually done inside the workshop that is of any sexual behavior.

Love: We've all heard of the Kama Sutra. Some people believe it and tantric sex are one in the same and it's just semantics. Is that correct?

Valentine: Tantric sex and Kama Sutra are not the same. Kama Sutra is a like the first sexual manual ever put together, so it doesn't just talk about sexual positions, but how to be a lover to your partner. It goes into a huge variety of other things outside of actual sex. You can think of it as a sexual manual. It's totally different than tantric sex, but in the Kama Sutra they teach things that you would do if you were making love in a more tantric way. So they complement each other, but they are not the same ...

[Tantra] is also about tapping into your own essence, so communing with yourself and communing with someone else, and also touching that divine source. The process of communing with yourself and your partner stirs up another entity and that is really the divine source. That is what occurs when you're in union making love and communing in that way — you are really tapped into something greater than yourself and your partner.

Love: What are some of the benefits to sacred sex or tantric sex?

Valentine: When you are having ordinary sex, it's usually something that is performance driven with an end, so you are working toward the goal or the end. In tantric lovemaking, it's really just the experience and the journey itself is the "wow" — you are relaxing into lovemaking, so it's not all that built-up tension and the big blast ... tantra sex is about relaxing into the sensuality of lovemaking. You are very in tune to all your senses and how it feels, smells and tastes and you make a lot of eye contact. Imagine making love with your eyes open and really connected with your partner, gazing into their eyes, and as your bodies are undulating and you're breathing, you're cycling your energy and the energy rises and falls and it's just a seasaw. They call it riding the waves — just imagine that

and how you can sustain that for quite some time — you are so connected and tuned in and it's as if you are one unit undulating together. That is a different experience than ordinary sex, where we go right up the sexual response cycle, you have your arousal, your plateau, your orgasm and you come down. In tantric sex, it's much more about peaking a little and then kind of dipping down as you relax and then building back up and relaxing into it. You can do that many times before orgasm is reached, if it's desired or not.

Love: Is there anything you can tell our listeners that they can do to enhance their sex life or practice tantric sex now?

Valentine: First off, talking about what each has in mind about tantric sex or how they can better the sex life they have already is where to start.

One of my favorite practices is eye gazing. Sitting across from one another — and you might want to hold each other's hands or you might want to put your hand on each other's heart center — gaze into each other's eyes. It's looking into a person's eyes — it's not staring, but really looking in and allowing yourself to drop into a deeper space with your partner as you are gazing into their eyes. Here is this human

being across from you, this beautiful person who you've chosen to be with you in this moment in time and just allow yourself to move into that space and breath together — nice full breaths in together and then out. Just being in the moment with each other in reverence and in honoring ... really connecting with your partner, eye to eye and breath to breath and just allow yourself to be in that space.

ABOUT DR. SALLY VALENTINE

Dr. Sally Valentine has a doctorate in clinical sexology and is a licensed clinical social worker. She is also an AASECT certified sex therapist and supervisor, a certified hypnotherapist and yoga teacher. For more information about her, her workshops or services, visit www.dr.sallyvalentine.com. EE

