



AUTHENTIC CONNECTION

Intimacy Exercises

These practices are designed to deepen one's relationship to self, and to others. If we can't connect with ourselves, it's very challenging to connect to other people. With these exercises it's important to keep guiding people into noticing what they're experiencing in their body, so as not to get caught in the stories of the mind.

I learnt most of these techniques through conscious sensuality/ tantra retreats and events.

They encourage honesty, vulnerability and self awareness, which leads to greater feelings of openness, sensitivity, receptivity, belonging and acceptance.

They help us to explore our emotional worlds, often bringing to the surface challenging emotions such as fear, shame, guilt, anger, or grief, to be witnessed in a held space. Through revealing ourselves, and being met with acceptance from others, this can instigate a healing process, within which we learn to accept ourselves more fully.

There are hundreds of these exercises. These are the ones I most frequently use in my work for their simplicity and effectiveness.

Power Spots

A basic and effective exercise to help people connect with themselves is to bring their hands to their power spots. There are several power spots which can be explored with a partner. On your own the most grounding are the heart and the stomach.

Bringing one hand to your heart and one hand to your stomach, take some deep breaths. Notice how you are feeling. Just inviting this action brings most people a sense of calm and safety.

Full list of power spots:

- Back of neck (supporting head)
- Heart
- Back (Behind Heart)
- Stomach
- Back (behind Stomach)
- Root (Cupping your sexual area)
- Feet

It can be a beautiful and fun experience with a partner to place your hands on these various power spots, gently, but also firm. You want to really feel the presence of the hands. Of course with everything related to touch it's very important to get consent and negotiate any areas that are off limits.

We're not going to explore this in detail in this training, but ask me any questions if you're curious.

Partner Exercises

Palm to Palm

- Standing with the palms of your hands facing each other but not touching, about a foot apart
- Notice how you feel, try bringing them a tiny bit closer, until you can feel the heat of the other person's hand (NO TOUCHING)
- Experiment with the distance, slowly further away and slowly closer.

Eye Gazing

This is one of the simplest exercises in the world, and often one of the hardest. It is very unusual for most people to look into the eyes of anyone for longer than a few seconds, let alone strangers.

This practice reaches a peak at around four minutes, you can build up to that slowly.

A good rule of thumb when guiding this exercise is to notice how YOU FEEL. If you're feeling tense, chances are they are too. Invite breathing, relaxing shoulders and face etc. Give guidance that you would need in that situation.

I usually do three or four partners and with each partner add another layer of guidance. For the first one just lower them in gently so that they get a feel for what it is, perhaps only 30 seconds. With each partner increase the amount of time they are eye gazing.

There are lots of ways you can play with this one and integrate it into other exercises.

Top tips for guidance:

Basic

- Find a partner and stand a foot or so apart
- Take a breath together
- Notice how you feel with this person
- (You will probably see some folded arms or arms in pockets) Allowing your hands to come down by your sides. Relax your body, your jaw, soften the knees a little
- (If you can sense some people holding back laughter) and if you need to laugh you can laugh, if you need to cry you can cry...
- If you're feeling nervous or awkward that's ok, just notice that.
- It's perfectly normal to find this challenging or wierd at first, because it's so rare that we actually connect with people that we know in this way, let alone strangers.
- If it gets too much you can always close your eyes for a moment and come back to yourself until you're ready to connect again.

Level 2

- Now begin to peel back the layers of this person... see if you can see beyond their physical appearance... now see if you can look past any ideas or stories that you might have about them.... Or that they might have about themselves... see if you can touch that place that is universal
- Notice that the person in front of you has the capacity to experience great love... and great loss. That they long for connection and belonging, just like you do.... That they have had experiences of fear and vulnerability... just like you have.

Level 3

- Now bring your awareness to how much you're allowing yourself to be seen... and if you come up against any barriers in you, just notice them. You don't need to change anything, sometimes just bringing awareness creates a change.
- See if you can switch between seeing them, and letting them see you. For some it can feel very subtle, for others it can feel like a huge shift.

Hand on Heart Breathing

- Stand opposite your partner and make eye contact
- Take a breath
- Check for consent to put your hand on your partners heart.
- If the answer is 'no' respond with 'thank you'
- If 'yes' raise your right hand and place it on your partners heart
- Then raise your left hand and bring it towards your heart and place it over your partner's hand.
- Synchronize your breathing.

Authentic Relating

Intention: To realise how much we can notice about someone we hardly know. To create intimacy. To see how much of our emotions we wear on our face.

Instructions

1. You can be seated for this exercise
2. Decide who will be partner A and who will be Partner B
3. Start by closing your eyes. (30 secs) and notice how you feel in this moment
Focus on sensation and emotion
4. Open your eyes and allow them to meet the person opposite you. Eye gaze for 1 minute
5. Partner A then says to partner B “when I look at you I see...” Start with the physical appearance, and then zoom in until you are noticing things about their emotions and personality
6. Each time you give a new reflection, start with the line “when I look at you I see...”
Continue for 3 minutes. Partner B stays silent and receives the reflections
7. Then swap over, start again from step 3
8. Once complete, spend 2-4 minutes sharing in pairs, then come together and share as a group

‘What My Heart Truly Longs For’

Intention: To get below the surface of what someone thinks

Instructions:

1. Find a partner
2. Partner A speaks for 2-3 minutes while partner B listens
3. Partner A starts each sentence with ‘what my heart truly longs for is...’ and then says what they’re heart truly longs for
4. After 3 minutes you swap over

Group Exercises

Cyclonic Enquiry

Intention: Deepening trust and intimacy within a group through shared vulnerability

1. Groups of 4-6
2. Choose a theme to explore or a question to answer.
3. A good one is 'if you really got to know me you would know that...'
4. Each person in the circle speaks something a little vulnerable. For example 'if you really got to know me, you would know that I'm actually afraid of the dark' or 'I used to steal when I was 12', or 'I suffer from anxiety'
5. Keep the shares relatively concise. Less than 30 seconds long
6. Take it in turns, going around the circle for 10 minutes. Each person will share multiple times, usually revealing more and more vulnerable things each time.

Other example themes/ starter statements:

'What I'm ashamed of is...'

'Something I love about myself is...'

'I'm afraid of...'

Hot Seat

Intention: To create a culture of radical honesty

1. One person takes a turn in the 'hot seat'
2. The group can ask them any question which they must answer honestly
3. They get to choose how exposing the questions are by saying whether they want a one chilli, two chilli or three chilli question
4. If they really don't want to answer a question they can choose to pass.
