



TOUCH & SEXUAL HEALING

TOUCH AS THE PRIMARY ELEMENT OF SENSUAL & EROTIC EXPRESSION

A L I N E L A P I E R R E

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ABSTRACT

Touch and Sexual Healing addresses sensual and erotic touch experiences from several perspectives to explore the personal and intimate sensual dimension of human relational experience.

First, it looks at the neural basis of the sense of touch by reviewing the key tactile receptors in the skin, muscles, and deep tissues and their effect on the brain. With these sensory principles in mind, touch exercises are presented that address the development of palpation awareness.

Then, it looks at how the power of intention and the importance of focused attention help partners enter the present moment of sexual relationship and fine tune the psychological experience of touching a partner erotically. Finally, it considers the important aspect of using touch to heal the wounds that abuse and neglect leave in our lives. The book ends on an inspirational note with the description of a healthy erotic exchange seen as a three phase unfolding of attunement, resonance, and integration.

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TOUCH AND SEXUAL HEALING

Touch as the Primary Element of Sensual and Erotic Expression

ALINE LAPIERRE, PSYD

...touching in different rhythms, through placement of attention within specific layers of the body, through following existing lines of force and suggesting new ones, and through changes in the pressure and quality of our touch, we come into harmony with the different tissues and their associated qualities of mind.

—Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen

With some 6-10 million tactile sensors forming an intricate sensory network that covers our entire body, the sense of touch gives us an amazingly accurate mental picture of ourselves and our surroundings. It is through the responses of these millions of skin receptors that we delight in the tenderness of a caress. It is because of touch that we remember the feel of a loved one's hand in ours, the curves of his or her body, the texture of his or her hair. It is through the sense of touch that our brain knows skin quality, body heat, pressure, friction and weight—all essential components contributing to our enjoyment of the nonverbal world of sensual and erotic play.

Ashley Montagu wrote that touch is the primary element of sexual expression. For this reason, it is unfortunate that few of us receive insightful education in the art of touch. We learn anatomical facts about male and female bodies, but rarely are we given instruction in the "how-to" of touching the body for health and pleasure. In truth, many of us have not been touched in satisfying ways and may still be conditioned by belief systems that instill guilt, fear or shame about touch, in particular when it comes to touching erogenous zones. The misuse of touch is reflected in the profound suffering caused by physical and sexual abuse and in the deep yearnings and disappointments that lack of loving touch leaves in the lives of many. Individuals who have been subjected to the traumatizing effects of touch violations and/or neglect frequently need reparative touch experiences to reclaim the lost spontaneity of their sensory responses. They may require guidance to learn how to give and

receive touch that expresses connection to a loved one. For anyone interested in deepening the intimacy of their erotic involvement, the development and refinement of one's ability to take in and receive, through touch, the subtleties of our partner's body, ought to be a primary objective.

This eBook addresses sensual and erotic touch experience from several perspectives, moving into the personal and intimate sensual and erotic dimension of our human relational experience. We first explore the neural basis of the sense of touch by reviewing the key tactile receptors in the skin, muscles, and deep tissues and their effect upon the brain. With these sensory principles in mind, we present touch exercises that address the development of palpation awareness. We then look at how the power of intention and the importance of focused attention help us enter the present moment of sexual relationship and fine tune the psychological experience of touching a partner erotically. Finally, we explore the important aspect of using touch to nurture and heal the wounds that neglect and abuse leave in our lives. We end on an inspirational note with the description of healthy erotic touch exchange seen as a three phase unfolding of attunement, resonance, and integration.

TOUCH EXPLORATION I

CREATING A SENSORY BODY MAP

General Principles

It is important for lovers to learn about each other's touch preferences. We come to relationships with personal expectations, often failing to remember that each individual has unique sensitivities. For this reason, we encourage partners to take a sensory inventory of each other's bodies. This helps identify which areas are receptive and which are not, which regions hunger to be touched and which do not. It is common to touch in ways that feel good to us, but regrettably, it is not always the best strategy to please a partner. For example, some of us need deep pressure with an active rhythm to register pleasure whereas others prefer a light, slow touch. It is each couple's responsibility to find out how to please each other.

Keep in mind that touch receptors in the skin are unevenly distributed and particularly concentrated in the mouth, palms of the hands and soles of the feet, nipples, and genitals.

This exercise is a sensual exploration. Be clear that it is not intended to be a sexual encounter so that your partner can relax into their own experience and know that you are there for them, to get to know them.

Verbalizing Touch Preferences

Sexual health is intimately related to our ability to talk about sexual matters. Talk to your partner about your touch wants and needs, fears and worries.

As giver

Invite your partner's verbal feedback as you touch the shapes and contours of his/her body; your partner's words will help you become familiar with their sensory preferences and help you learn about the type and quality of touch they like.

- *Move your hands slowly at first to give your partner the time to experience and verbalize his/her responses to your touch.*
- *Listen and be open to feedback. Be prepared to follow your partner's instructions and even stop if necessary. This exploration is a learning opportunity and you don't have to be perfect. It is easy, particularly with a partner who has suffered touch violations, to feel inadequate or rejected as they struggle with their body's responses. (You will find what to do in such situations in the Touch and Sexual Healing section.)*
- *It is important to move with a slow rhythm. When touching a limb, finger or toe, wrap your hands around it to enfold that part of the body and hold it gently.*

Questions to ask your partner

As giver, the following are sample questions to guide your touch exploration. They communicate your desire to please your partner and help him/her relax and trust you.

Where would you like me to touch you?

What would you like me to do?

Can you show me exactly where it feels good?

Is this the right amount of pressure? Is this too much?

Do you want more?

Would you like me to change what I do?

Where would you like me to touch you next?

As receiver

Speaking your preferences means taking the risk to be honest about what feels good. Your verbal feedback is important, but you can also use sounds of pleasure and displeasure, movements such as stretching to invite a fuller touch or pulling away to express displeasure. Let your expression well up spontaneously: a caring partner will be grateful to know what pleases you and will then know how to give you more of what you like.

Using a pleasure rating scale

If words are difficult use a rating scale of 1 to 10 to communicate the degree of pleasurable response. A 10 is the absolute best experience, whereas a 1 denotes indifference. Use a minus scale for discomfort and pain.

THE NEURAL BASIS OF OUR SENSE OF TOUCH

The skin is no more separated from the brain than the surface of a lake is separate from its depths....To touch the surface is to stir the depths.

— Deane Juhan

To understand the primary importance of touch in sexual arousal and in the sensory gratification integral to sexual health, it is useful to review the key sensory components that make up our tactile experience. In addition to familiar touch interactions such as handshakes or hugs, there are dimensions to touch that lead us into internal and visceral sensory components out of which affective and cognitive experiences unfold and upon which our sexual responses rely.

The Skin as Sense Organ

Touch cannot be explored without an understanding of the skin. Skin demonstrates a reflex expressiveness to scores of mental events. From blushing, to goose bumps or hives, the association between mental states and the skin is quite direct. The complexity of the pathways by which the nerve fibers link the receptors at the skin with the neurons in the brain is of significance to our budding knowledge of how to touch because it helps us to understand the neuronal language the body uses to communicate with the brain.

*Touch is the chronological and psychological
Mother of the Senses.*

*It is well developed in the single cell amoeba,
it develops in week 6 of gestation,
and it involves the entire body.*

In the embryo, the skin, the central nervous system, and the brain develop from the same layer of tissue, the ectoderm. Skin, nervous system, and brain are so closely related that one could describe the skin as the outer surface of the brain and the brain as the deepest layer of the skin; long nerve fibers convey electrical impulses from the receptors in the skin, joints, and deep tissues to the somatosensory functions in the brain. These tactile sensory impressions are mediated through three separate yet interacting systems: (1) an *exteroceptive system* which, along with the special sense organs such as eyes, ears, nose,

and mouth, includes sensors for the stimuli applied to the skin from the outside environment; (2) a *proprioceptive system* which monitors the position and movements of the body using the information from specialized sensory receptors in the joints, tendons, muscles, and organs of balance; and (3) an *interoceptive system* which provides information about conditions within the body, such as temperature, blood pressure, and visceral states (e.g., the fullness or emptiness of the internal organs) All three systems contribute to our tactile felt sense experience. Based on the information collected from the sensory receptors in these three systems, our brain forms a topographical map—often called the *sensory homunculus*—in the somatosensory cortex. As Juhan (1987) eloquently describes:

Local qualities in the skin, joints, and the deep tissues “tag” the nerve ends which they contact with subtle chemical messages, and these chemical “tags” direct axons growing *inward* toward the appropriate connection in the spinal cord and brain. The process...is highly specific, and *it is the periphery which helps to organize the connections in the central nervous system.* (p. 40) [italics added]

When it comes to touch, the organization of the central nervous system begins primarily with the stimuli received by the receptors in the skin, joints, and muscles. This suggests that touch is an exceptional means of influencing the growth of the neural pathways and brain connections that organize how we respond to the people and the environment around us.

Specialized Skin Receptors

The skin has eyes.

— Diane Ackerman

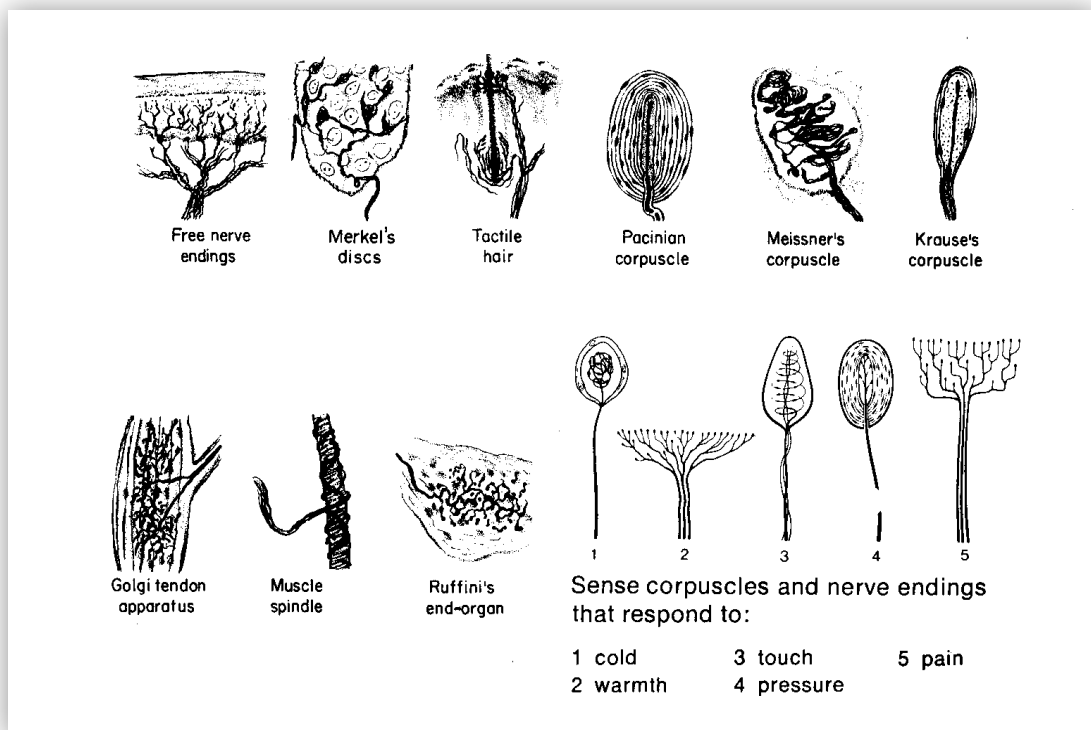
We are all familiar with the numbing effect of a shot of novocaine at the dentist after which, without sensation, it is nearly impossible to eat or speak. When we “lose touch” with cutaneous sensations, we become unfamiliar to ourselves. To be numb to touch is to live in a world in which the body feels strangely deadened and endangered in its capacity to interact with its environment.

The sensations of touch are initiated by mechanical stimulation. Embedded within the layers of the skin—in the epidermis, dermis, and subcutaneous tissue—are specialized nerve endings that tell the body about its environment. It has been suggested that there are three main kinds of specialized nerve endings, each with particular sensitivities: some respond to temperature changes, some to pain, while others react to pressure. It was

believed that these receptors each had their own pathways to the brain. However, the complexity of our sensory responses has spurred the reevaluation of this simplistic view of how we make sense of our responses to touch. Sensory impulses interface so thoroughly that each kind of tactile stimulation interpenetrates with and enhances the others. Receptors are now seen to combine their signals to produce a wide variety of *twinges*, caravans of sensations that are thought of as *code senders* (Ackerman, 1990). For example, Ackerman writes, pain produces irregular neural bleats at sharp intervals, itching produces fast regular patterns, heat generates a crescendo as the area heats up, and light pressure produces a flurry of excitement that soon fades whereas a stronger pressure lengthens that flurry of activity.

Developing Touch Awareness

Since our tactile receptors detect and respond to varying thresholds of pressure, friction, temperature, and vibration, becoming familiar with the specificity of responses in the skin's receptors is a first step to developing touch awareness. The following list of receptors and their functions may seem a little dry, however, familiarity with their location, the types of signals they emit, and their sensory thresholds helps to develop our palpation awareness. Although there are a variety of known skin receptors, there are probably many not yet identified, consequently the following list is not intended to be exhaustive.



Some of the known skin receptors

- ***Pacini Corpuscles.*** The largest of the specialized tactile receptors, measuring up to four millimeters long, Pacini corpuscles reside in the lower layers of the skin, muscles, and tendons. These receptors promptly detect changes in pressure and sudden displacements of the skin. Interestingly, they pick up vibrations such as ground vibrations, the buzz of a cell phone, and vibrations in the high-frequency range such as the sound of a violin string. Pacini corpuscles are found primarily in the palm of the hands and soles of the feet, in the genital organs of both sexes, and in the mammary glands; they are abundant in the joints and deeper subcutaneous tissues reporting on organ shifts and joint movements.
- ***Meissner Corpuscles.*** Inside the ultra sensitive, tiny forty-thousandths of a millimeter thick egg-shaped Meissner corpuscle, nerve endings branch and loop like the filaments inside a light bulb, responding rapidly to the slightest stimulation, stimulating a wealth of sensations. These minute receptors found just under the surface of the skin throughout the whole body, are predominant in the hairless areas: soles of the feet, palms of the hand and fingertips (reported to have 9,000 per square inch), lips and tongue, nipples, clitoris, and penis. Arranged in parallel to the surface of the skin, they are particularly sensitive to light touch at a perpendicular angle and record low-frequency vibrations such as the feeling of a finger gently moving across the skin.
- ***Tactile Disks and Free Nerve Endings.*** These receptors, found everywhere in the epidermis, detect light touch and pressure and are particularly sensitive to temperature change and pain.
- ***Merkel's Disks.*** Saucer shaped, they lie just below the surface and respond to gradual skin indentation and continuous, constant pressure.
- ***Ruffini Cylinders.*** Located in the connective tissue of the limbs and joints, Ruffini cylinders respond slowly to signals of continuous pressure. Particularly abundant in the joint capsules, they inform us of the location and movement of our limbs.
- ***Golgi Tendon Organs.*** These highly sensitive tension sensors are located in the tendons and muscle fibers. They report any change in length and tension of the skeletal muscles to help the brain calculate the strength and balance needed for tasks such as walking up or down stairs.

- ***Hair End Organs.*** Wrapped around the follicle of each hair, these end organs register the slightest movement of the hairs.
- ***Temperature Receptors and Thermal Spots.*** No single specialized receptor type is the thermal receptor and it is thought that a form of free nerve ending (which is also the main receptor for pain) mediates thermal sensations. Receptors for cold lie relatively close to the skin surface, while those for warmth are located at deeper levels. We sense heat and warmth in a general way, unlike the specific localizations for touch or pressure. Temperature sensitivity is irregularly distributed in thermal spots of about 1mm in diameter and varies depending on temperature shifts due to heat radiation, conduction, convection from moisture evaporation, and the dilation and constriction of blood vessels.

Pathways from the Skin to the Brain

The information from the skin receptors moves to the brain through two major neural pathways: 1) the fast conducting, large in diameter *lemniscal pathway* transmitting precise localized information about touch, movement and sharp pain, and 2) the slow conducting, small in diameter *spinothalamic pathway* carrying input concerning non-localized touch, temperature, and pain.

The nerve fibers in both lemniscal and spinothalamic tracts have an added differentiation in their responses referred to as their *rate of adaptation*. Some fibers only respond when pressure begins or ends, soon becoming unresponsive to sustained pressure, while others only respond to sustained and deepening pressure. Based on this information, we can begin to see that *to keep neuronal pathways active and the brain interested, we must vary the rhythms and pressure with which we touch, otherwise the brain stops responding to our sensory input.*

*Some fibers only respond when pressure begins or ends
and become numb to sustained pressure.*

Other fibers only respond to sustained and deepening pressure.

*To keep neuron pathways active and the brain interested,
we must vary the rhythms and pressure of our touch,
otherwise the brain stops responding to the sensory input*

Proprioception

Another neural distinction which adds to the complexity of our tactile awareness is the role played by the Golgi tendon organs, Pacini corpuscles and Ruffini cylinders in the somatosensory system's *proprioception* (also called *kinesthesia*). Situated in the joints, muscles, and tendons that hold the bones together, the proprioceptive system monitors the position and movements of the body. Golgi tendon organs, Pacini corpuscles, and Ruffini cylinders are stimulated by changes in bone angles and joint surfaces. Interestingly, the nerve pathways for proprioception project *together* with those for skin sensations. Thus, the neuronal excitation that arises from the stretch and strain of shifting body positions together with the capacity of the hands to grasp and squeeze work collectively with touch sensations at the skin to produce a *unitary* experience. The position of our body and the variety of our movements as we engage in erotic play are in functional unity with the sensory effects of skin contact producing a kind of orchestration of sensation and movement all playing together like instruments in an orchestra. Given that the firing of tactile neurons excites or inhibits in response to a diversity of constantly changing stimuli, we can understand that if our touch is to gratify the needs of our partner's nervous system, it is essential to be attentive to how they respond to diverse pressures, rhythms, and movements.

TOUCH EXPLORATION II

STIMULATING SKIN RECEPTORS

The Building Blocks of Touch

The nervous system is a world of its own. One crosses the threshold of this world respectfully as if entering a sanctuary. Slow or fast, hard or soft, the way in which you, as giver of touch, make contact with the receiver of your touch reveals your sensitivity, capacity for focused attention, and announces your intentions. Think of doing the following exercises as a musician would of practicing scales.

Slow Entry

Like knocking on the door to announce your arrival, a slow entry gives the receiver time to focus inward and allows the brain to orient to the inner experience of the sensory messages coming in from the touch receptors at the skin. Moving slowly creates a restful atmosphere.

As giver

- *Ask your receiving partner where he/she would like you to position your hand. Place your hand slowly over that area and hold it there motionless while giving your partner your full attention. Simple physical contact with full attention and loving intention is powerful in itself.*
- *As you maintain motionless contact with your partner, relax and pay attention to your own breath, allowing it to become full and deep. Then, pay attention to your partner's breathing. Look for changes in their rhythm, particularly deep sighs which are indicative of relaxation.*
- *After some minutes, ask your partner what he/she is experiencing. Listen carefully to the feedback. Adjust your touch accordingly.*

As receiver

- *This is your time to receive your partner's full attention and to ask for what you want.*
- *Focus inward to notice the sensory effects and changes in your body that result from being touched. Let your partner know how his/her presence feels to you.*
- *Place your partner's hand on different areas of your body and share the changes in your responses.*

Light Stroking

Some skin receptors are activated by light, slow, and detailed touch and respond to novelty such as the continually changing feeling of a finger gently stroking.

As giver

- *Use your fingertips which are reported to have 9,000 Meissner corpuscles per square inch. Lightly stroke and carefully delineate those areas of your partner's body particularly rich in receptors gradually moving to increasingly sexually responsive areas: cheeks and lips, palms of the hands and soles of the feet, nipples, and finally, only if and when your partner expresses readiness, clitoris and penis.*
- *The head, face, and cheeks are particularly sensitive to tender stroking. Lightly stroke your partner's hair to activate the sensors in the hair follicles.*

As receiver

- *As you allow your partner to explore your body, let him or her know where and how you most enjoy being touched so that you both know what most pleases you.*

Graduated Pressure

Alternating gradual skin indentation and release with constant pressure stimulates pressure receptors and keeps the conductivity in the nerve tracts active. Light to moderate pressure allows for a penetrating touch that gives a profound sense of connection. Direct your pressure inward toward the center of the area you are touching, and then release it.

As giver

Start with large areas such as the belly, particularly the lower belly, inner thighs, back and buttocks which are more forgiving of experimentation.

- *Using the flat of your hand, begin applying a light pressure. Check with your partner for the optimal degree of pressure which is neither too light nor too heavy. Give your partner time to take it in.*
- *Gradually increase and decrease your pressure. Have your partner tell you his/her preferences.*
- *Using this same graduated pressure, cup your hands around the arms and legs and squeeze them along their whole length. This is particularly useful to bring a partner who has trouble connecting with themselves into the experience of their body.*
- *When you understand your partner's preferences, use your fingers to explore pressure in a more differentiated way. Explore the densely innervated areas of the lips, nipples, labia and clitoris, scrotum and penis.*

As receiver

- *Focus on your internal sensations.*
- *As you learn to know yourself, your task is to share what you are experiencing so that you guide your partner to become the lover of your dreams.*

Friction

There are several ways of applying friction. You can rub the surface of the skin or press into the skin using pressure to stretch and move the surface skin against the

deeper layers of tissues. Friction is highly arousing yet can also irritate or numb the receptors: use it judiciously for maximum effect.

As giver

- *With varied degrees of pressure, move backward-and-forward or side-to-side. Create unexpected rhythmic movements that keep the body-brain interested and attentive.*
- *With varied degrees of pressure, move your hand in small-to-large circles in clockwise and counterclockwise motions. Create unanticipated movements to keep the body-mind curious and involved.*

As receiver

- *Your focus, as always, is to receive and express your sensations and feelings. As your partner learns to know you, the sounds and movements you make become as clear a communication as your words.*
-

TOUCH LITERACY

*Touch is a language that can communicate more love in five seconds
than words can in five minutes.*

—Ashley Montagu

It is said that Helen Keller's receptive sense of touch was so finely tuned that if she put her hand to the radio to enjoy music, she could tell the difference between the horns and the strings. In a similar vein, osteopathic pioneer Viola Fryman noted that by laying a hand on a muscle, it is possible in a few seconds to "tune in" to the inherent motion within, establishing a rapport of fluid continuity between the toucher and the touchee. Are these unusually gifted individuals, or are these skills possible for all of us?

This section speaks to our touch potential—what I call *touch literacy*. Building on the previous descriptions of the neural elements of tactile information, we now seek to develop the *art* of touch. Our goal is to help partners meet each other's tactile needs and fulfill each other's contact expectations by learning to give a quality of touch that leads to heightened sensations and transports the body to blissful states.

From Felt Sense to Felt Self

Eugene Gendlin's work on the *felt sense* gives us a skill of key importance to the sensual enjoyment and sexual excitement possible through touch. According to Gendlin, who coined the term *felt sense* in his book *Focusing* (1981), the felt sense emerges at the intersection of the psychological and the organic and allows us to "form meaning from bodily experience." Focusing is a process which teaches how to pay attention to body sensations in order to experience the knowledge the body holds on nonverbal levels. In felt sense perception, bio-chemical reactions in the nerves and brain dovetail with emotional features, and the combined experiences, each belonging to a different order of being, give meaning to our internal bodily experience. Although in focusing, the intellect is very much in contact with the life of the senses, the felt sense is primarily "not a mental experience, but a physical one, a bodily awareness of a situation or person or event." Gendlin writes:

A felt sense is usually not just there, it must form. You have to know how to let it form by attending inside your body. ... A felt sense is the body's sense of a particular problem or situation. (p. 10)

When we spend time with the felt sense, we discover that our inner intangible sense of the body progresses from silent existence in the remote fringes of our awareness to a vivid inclusion on the map of our consciousness. The more attentively we concentrate on perceiving our sensations—skin sensitivity, body heat, involuntary and voluntary muscular contractions, organ vibrations, body positions, etc.—the more vivid the awareness of our internal visceral-affective experience becomes. Felt sense qualities are encouraged to unfold according to their own flow much as, in free association, thoughts are noticed as they float to the surface of the mind. By using words that describe movement, texture, color, temperature, and quality of pulsation that make up the sensory state, inner sensations can be brought into words. Sensory attributes can then be processed verbally in order to translate their implicit information into personal meaning. In this way, new experiences are both drawn from and given back to the biological realm, strengthening the link between mind and body. It is through our felt sense perception that we connect sexual experiences with the emotional dimension of love.

*Psychologically meaningful and erotically charged touch
relies on palpation awareness,
the ability to make sense of our loved one's body responses
and feel directly what cannot be said in words*

Palpation Awareness

Having the tactile sensitivity to touch a partner in ways that please him/her is fundamental to the success of erotic life. Receiving a partner's touch in ways that heighten pleasurable internal experience is its reciprocal experience. Psychologically meaningful and erotically charged touch relies on *palpation awareness*, the ability to make sense of our loved one's body responses and feel directly what cannot be said in words. The various elements of tactile receptivity described above lead us to think of touch as a sensory language with a vocabulary that can be learned and practiced. Touch gives us access to a nonverbal alphabet of coded signals, a sensory language assembled from contact "words," "gesture sentences," culminating in kinesthetic erotic "poetry." Developing palpation awareness includes learning skills such as the best way to touch the different areas of our partner's body, the ability to be present to our own sensory responses as we touch, and understanding the effects of our touch while we are touching and being touched. If we

imagine the skin receptors to be like the notes of a piano or strings of a violin, we can use aware touch to intentionally “play” the body’s sensory responses as one would a musical instrument and orchestrate a range of pleasurable responses in our partner’s body.

Attention and Intention

Effective touch requires sensitivity and a special way of paying attention to the inner life of the body. We have much to learn from bodyworkers and somatic psychotherapists who are trained to sense through their hands and to visualize in their mind's eye what is happening under their hands. Bodyworkers learn to contact the skin receptors to initiate relaxation and healing processes. Somatic innovator Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen (1993) articulates how, through placing our *attention* selectively on certain areas (back, shoulder, chest, etc.) and our *intention* within specific layers of the body’s tissues (skin, joints, muscle, etc.), through varied qualities and rhythms of contact, touch-literate individuals attune and synchronize to their partners’ inner worlds.

It is equally possible for the motivated lay person to use touch in such sensitive ways. By using touch pressure, friction, and rhythms of contact to modulate sensory communication, an involved partner can attune to the needs and expectations of the loved one. Holding in awareness such feelings as “I care about you,” or such thoughts as “You are so beautiful to me” or “I want to be with you” while touching adds focused attention and loving intention to the sensory language of touch.

TOUCH EXPLORATION III

A FELT SENSE EXPERIENCE

Learning to Sense Self

1. Making space

Take the time to get comfortable and clear yourself of mental static or any sort of chatter. Set current problems and past memories aside so that your attention is in the present moment. Remind yourself that your body sensations are your destination and put them at the center of your focused attention. Tell your thoughts that you will listen to them later.

2. Finding the felt sense

This exercise uses the skills described above in Creating a Sensory Body Map and Stimulating Skin Receptors.

As receiver

- *Focus your full attention on the sensations arising inside your body as a result of your partner touching you. Where in your body are you experiencing these sensations? Do they have a particular quality, a movement?*
- *Whatever your body's responses, let these sensory impressions exist just as they are, without judging them. Then, focus as much as you can on those that feel the most pleasing to you.*
- *Can you perceive your partner's intention, his/her caring? His/her excitement at being in contact with you? How does that make you feel?*
- *After observing your responses for a while, see if you can find matching words or images to describe the emotion arising from the sensation. When a match between a sensation and a word or image comes about, there will be a feeling of rightness in your belly. In focusing, this is called **resonating**.*

3. Resonating

- *Resonating engages body and mind in a reciprocal reverberation. For example, a sensation of expansion in your chest might bring the words "I love you," and with these words, a feeling of pleasure might spread from the area of your heart throughout your body. You might then experience an enhanced awareness of your love for your partner.*
- *By alternating your attention between the bodily sensations and the matching words or images, your mind witnesses your body's experience and your body expresses your mind.*

4. Receiving

- *For those whose mind rushes in, who get caught in words or lose the sensory experience, slow down. Be patient with yourself while you try to reconnect with either the lost sensation or the matching words or images. With gentle presence and without pressure, the resonance comes back.*
 - *Let go of expectations and judgment. As long as you are engaged in a loving experience, welcome what arises in your felt sense. Breathe, let it develop, and share what is there with your partner. By focusing on the felt sense, we develop a deeper relationship to our bodies and invite pleasure to be an increasingly important part of our lives.*
-

Needs and Expectations

How is it that there is a difference between self-produced touch and how we respond when someone else touches that same place in the same way? The answer lies in the unpredictable and random nature of our partner's touch. Our experience is heightened when we are touched in ways we cannot anticipate. Because our brain is fashioned to notice and respond to new stimulus, in erotic matters, we tend to enjoy the surprise of creative contact. In the felt sense—in the internal experience of one's mind and body—the anticipation of psychologically and sexually significant touch frequently triggers vital erotic arousal and fantasies. It is inevitable that, consciously or unconsciously, we not have expectations of each other's touch.

However, in the heated moment of the sexual encounter, our needs and expectations can remain undefined or unmet and difficult to communicate. Touch needs that remain unarticulated or unsatisfied linger as disappointment or resentment, generating emotional distance between partners. For partners to build a reciprocal positive touch attunement towards each other, it is helpful for the giver to inquire about the effects of his/her touch, and for the receiver to respond with understandable verbal feedback. By learning about each other's touch preferences, we become sensitive to the type of touch our partner needs, to the appropriate timing and rhythms that move them, and to any difficulty they may have receiving. In this way, partners grow increasingly observant and communicative of the ways in which their physical contact is pleasure enhancing and furthering of intimacy, and learn to avoid what feels intrusive and distancing.

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TOUCH AND SEXUAL HEALING

*Sex, indeed, has been called the highest form of touch.
In the profoundest sense, touch is the true language of sex.
—Ashley Montagu*

We shift focus now to include a brief discussion on the use of touch in addressing sexual wounding. The need to be touched and held lovingly begins from the moment we are born. The quality of attention and the focus of intention transmitted through our hands and bodies are a particularly potent form of intimate communication that has a powerful psychosexual impact. Research into the relationship between touch deprivation and mental illness shows that violence and rage are demonstrably related to tactile deprivation (Prescott, 1975). When a person has experienced relational tactile–emotional neglect or violation, their body’s full capacity to become erotically charged is frequently disrupted and being touched in a nurturing and healing manner, in particular by a loving partner, can have a restorative effect on sensual and sexual health.

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Nurturing and healing touch intentions, employed to reenact and stimulate natural aspects of development and relationship, are ways to communicate in the sensory and motor modes that engage the language of the body at a level where we all have received our first imprints. Unfortunately, many couples remain unaware of the full range of benefits touch can bring into their lives. The lack of understanding of each other’s touch needs and preferences often leads to disappointment and the breakdown of erotic communication. When the intent motivating our touch is unclear, invasive, or developmentally inappropriate, even if unintentionally so, the effects may yield undesired, harmful, or re-traumatizing results. It is important, in healing our ability to give and receive touch, to understand the difference between loving exchange and violating penetration; this means recognizing boundary violations by sensing when we are met in an honoring manner and when we are used or manipulated. Becoming touch literate gives us the ability to draw felt

sense knowledge from direct sensory experience and therein lays a precious tool for personal safety and emotional freedom.

Often, intimate partners are not well matched: one partner may need healing contact in order to connect to his/her sexual desire while the other may find that such an intention diffuses the intensity of the sexual impulse. Overstimulating touch may short-circuit the building of sexual energy, whereas understimulating touch may lead to contact hunger. As a somatically trained psychotherapist, I have encountered many of these situations. The following vignettes illustrate situations that address the importance of touch in establishing the body's capacity for relationship.

Nurturing Touch

The Repair of Attachment Deficits

...those individuals who have been adequately mothered are clearly superior in all tactile relationships to those who have not.

—Ashley Montagu

During her beginning therapy sessions, Suzan, who suffered from unrelenting anxiety and fear of sexual encounters, had incidents when she began to cry uncontrollably. It was a desperate cry during which her eyes lost their focus and her arms flailed aimlessly. Her head and shoulders engaged in a mechanical back and forth movement increasing in intensity until her whole body shook. Eventually, she found resonating words: "She is shaking me."

Suzan had no explicit memories connected to this experience. From my perspective as her therapist, I saw a terrified infant who was reaching out for the non-existent loving presence of her mother. Suzan's body was expressing implicit memories of despair and disorganization; over time, it became clear that her body held the terrifying memories that she would not survive her mother's ongoing murderous rages expressed in the vigorous shaking of her baby.

Touch became an important part of our work together. I interrupted her desperate flailing by asking her to hold on to my fingers. I repeatedly brought her back into the present moment by asking her to look around the room and, as much as she could tolerate it, to look into my eyes. As the implicit frightening memories of the past gave way to the explicit knowledge of safety in the present, I encouraged her to ask me for what she wanted. She wanted to be quiet while I "watched over her" with my hands gently making contact

with an area of her body of her choice, most often her back or forehead. She wanted me to stay in contact with her while she drifted in reverie. She liked to wake up to my presence watching over her while she dozed off. She wanted the reassurance that she did not have to perform to maintain my attention. Over time, her hypervigilant nervous system calmed, her anxiety abated, and she learned to take in physical contact without bracing against abuse.

There is firm evidence that for each human being, how touch is received in adult life lies in the neuronal patterns established during infantile caregiving experiences. Basic research conducted by Tiffany Field (1995), director of the Touch Research Institutes at the University Of Miami School Of Medicine, shows that touch is at the foundation of relational experience and is a fundamental mode of interaction in the infant-caregiver relationship. Supporting Harlow's classical research that early skin-to-skin contact is essential for socioemotional and cognitive development, recent neurobiological research indicates that critical levels of tactile input of a specific quality and emotional content in early life is important for normal brain maturation. Some of the most powerful signals of caring are given through direct touch, and this "contact comfort" appears to activate endogenous opioid systems that reinforce social bonding. Panksepp (1998) notes that "a substantial amount of social motivation emerges from the pleasures of touch, and the pleasure of play is strongly dependent on the sensation of touch." Animals and babies stop crying rapidly when gently touched, soon closing their eyes and settling down in response to being held. The brain chemistries activated by these caring and supportive social interactions also include neuropeptides such as oxytocin and prolactin, as well as endogenous opioids such as endorphins. This gives solid evidence for the critical role of touch in human biology as well as psychology.

When childhood experiences of pleasure are absent, it is common for people to lose their desire to be in this world; their drive to live is lost in dissociation, collapse, anxiety, and depression. As in our vignette with Suzan, nurturing touch can fulfill lifelong attempts to get love in unresponsive or hostile environments. Because touch connects to the implicit sensory aspect of emotion, it can intervene at the physiological level in the unfolding and regulation of affective states that have damaged an individual's psychosexual capacity for engagement. Individuals with early deprivation can benefit from a nurturing contactful constancy in order to learn to trust relationships. The attuned use of nurturing touch, in particular when it is given by a loving partner, can initiate the experience of connection in a person who has never been met or understood at the organismic level. It can reach

through the traumatic layers of neglect, violence, invisibility, unworthiness, and numbness. The unconditional acceptance inherent in nurturing touch validates the foundation of self that is anchored in the body, what Freud called the body ego.

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TOUCH EXPLORATION IV

NURTURING TOUCH

The Gift of Unconditional Love

The aim of nurturing touch is to contact, respond to, comfort, and fulfill the unmet emotional needs of the inner child within your adult partner. Nurturing touch given by a loving partner is a valuable way to address breaches in the relational matrix which cannot be reached by verbal means alone.

Internal Focus

The giving partner holds a consistent loving intention, free of sexual pressure while the receiver's body-mind learns to be the center of a caring other's complete attention. In the same way that a loving mother does not pressure her child to respond to her needs, the giving partner does not impose a goal or outcome but listens to and makes room for the partner's responses.

Quiet Holding

Holding, stroking, and soft rocking allows for nonverbal healing to occur, as if, in the containing hands of the giver, the receiver's body-self can relax and understands itself a little more. The giver's goal is to stimulate the receiver's sense-memories of trust and loving comfort.

As giver

- *Give your partner your undivided attention. To establish an unconditionally accepting contact, center yourself in your heart, in your feeling of love for your partner and visualize that feeling moving from your heart through to your hands and whole body. Be clear with your partner that there will be no sex.*
- *Ask your partner what he/she would like and do it for as long as they need. Let them know that this is their time and that it brings you pleasure to give them what they ask for. To relieve any time pressure, set a parameter: "We have all the time in the world. We will do this for as long as you need. Today we have (set time frame) and if that is not enough, we'll do it again (set time) until you are completely satisfied."*

- *Follow through on your promise! If your partner needs more time than you have to give, plan as many additional periods of time as needed. When the need is filled, the receiver will naturally move on to the next phase in their psychosexual development.*

As receiver

- *Early needs are implicitly present as nonverbal yearnings in the body. Trust your felt sense to guide you to discover what your body desires. An example of a request might be: "I want to be two years old for the next hour. Hold me tight and tell me how much you love me..."*

Gentle Stroking and Rocking

In general, stroke with a broad even pressure letting the entire surface of your hand make uniform, even contact. This contributes to a feeling of soothing comfort and connection.

As giver

- *Imagine your hand is melting into your partner's body.*
- *Gently stroke your partner's head, face, belly or back, or any area of their choice.*
- *Invite them to lean into your body and rock them slowly. Accompanying the rocking with singing or humming can be particularly soothing. If your partner drifts or falls asleep, remain present. You are the caring and protective container they did not have and they need to feel your overseeing presence to develop trust. It is very touching, upon awakening, to find that your partner has been consciously watching over you. Your undivided attention is the greatest healing gift you can give a partner who struggles with early wounds.*

Healing Touch

The Repair of Psychosexual Wounds

Healing touch belongs to us all.

— Dolores Krieger

Mary and John were determined to make their marriage work but as the months passed, Mary was becoming increasingly angry at John and John was becoming increasingly distant and elusive. John had been severely physically abused and shamed by a rageful father and emotionally invaded by his

mother. Mary had been verbally abused. While at first, John liked Mary's aggressive sexual style, over time he found it overwhelming and noticed himself becoming increasingly numb. Rather than tell her, he avoided her. Mary found John's lack of sexual drive humiliating and rejecting. She expressed her disappointments in long angry tirades which left John feeling that he could "never do it right."

I asked if they liked each other's touch; each said no. John said that Mary had no finesse and that he wanted gentle stroking to calm his body after a hard day's work; Mary said that John was timid and unimaginative and easily hurt when she tried to tell him what she wanted. Each believed that "if he (she) loved me, he (she) would know what to do."

In his book *Healing Touch* (1994), Zach Thomas writes that to touch in a healing way, we must "coordinate our hearts with our hands to share compassion." Heart/hand coordination makes healing touch accessible to anyone who is able to feel compassion for another human being. When combined with the intimacy of sexual involvement, the healing power of the loved one's touch can help partners such as John and Mary initiate a new kind of collaboration in tending to the psychosexual wounds that create difficulty with their sexuality. Couples who have serious psychosexual issues are encouraged to use the support of a somatically-trained psychotherapist to facilitate the process of using healing touch.

***Attentiveness, heightened awareness,
moving slowly with utmost concentration yet maximum relaxation,
knowing when to hold, nurture, care,
when to pleasure, and when to confront—
these are the empathic qualities that inform healing touch
in the loving context of a sexual partnership***

The motivation to touch which flows to the hands from a compassionate heart is not based on veiled power games—that is, the person touching cannot view themselves in a position of authority over the one they are touching. When aligned with one's center of heartfelt compassion, the touch intention is to reach for emotional connection and it is from emotional connection that healing can take place and healthy sexuality emerge.

The particular awareness needed to touch with a healing intent is not one that is generally familiar to our Western cultures. Dolores Krieger, originator of *Therapeutic Touch* (1986), who has taught her technique to thousands of nurses and health professionals in hospitals across the country, makes the parallel between healing touch and meditation. To touch non-intrusively, to respectfully hold another's reality in one's hands, Krieger notes, calls for a *meditational presence*. She demonstrates that both touch and meditation involve training in attentiveness. Krieger measured changes in participants of *Therapeutic Touch* under the electroencephalogram (EEG):

In each case, the patients went into low amplitude Alpha state, a state of calmness and well-being and stayed there throughout the process. . . . On the contrary, the person playing the role of the healer went into a rhythmical, very high amplitude beta state, which is indicative of a state of deep concentration, similar to those occurring in mature meditators. (p. 75)

Attentiveness, heightened awareness, moving slowly with utmost concentration yet maximum relaxation, knowing when to hold, nurture, care, when to pleasure, and when to confront—these are the empathic qualities that inform healing touch in the loving context of a sexual partnership. These are the qualities of touch that let couples know that they are truly held in the heart and mind of their partners and this curative intention can reverse years of neurologically patterned neglect, deprivation, loneliness, and even abuse.

TOUCH EXPLORATION V

HEALING TOUCH

The Art of Empathic Attunement

Healing touch respects the body's own time where nothing can be rushed. As your touch skills develop, you will increasingly sense your partner's bodily responses within your own body: this is called empathic attunement. Remember that a healing intent grows the trust that restores the capacity for sexual intimacy.

As giver

- *The quality of your attention is of utmost importance.*

- *Set your own needs aside. A healing intention requires the ability to focus your full attention on your partner so that your mind is free of extraneous thoughts. Quiet yourself so that you become like still water upon which any movement makes an impression.*
- *Once you are still, centered, and with your full attention on your partner, ask yourself: What impressions are flowing through me? What imagery, fleeting ideas, insights? What cues am I picking up that would help my partner? What shifts or changes do I notice?*
- *Whatever the feelings that emerge for you and your partner, try to remain still and present. As giver, you are the stable container that allows your partner to explore his/her feelings. As your partner's trust grows, various experiences may unfold: emotions of shame, anger, grief, etc. The gift of your healing touch is the opportunity for your partner to realize that you can and want to be there to support him/her in transforming the pain.*

As receiver

- *Share your physical and emotional need. Take the time to identify what you would like from your partner, how you would like him/her to touch or hold you, and define the focus of the intention you would like him/her to hold while tending to you. It is possible that you may not want actual physical contact, but that just feeling your partner near you is contact enough in the beginning.*
 - *Experiencing the fear of being a burden, of taking too much time for yourself, of having to perform to be loved are not unusual. These fears are major roadblocks to deepening intimacy. As you receive your partner's healing presence, it is the hope that your trust in his/her ability to be present for you will grow so that these roadblocks can dissolve.*
 - *As your trust grows, various experiences may unfold: emotions of shame, anger, grief, etc. The gift of healing touch is the opportunity to realize that your partner can and wants to be there with you as you share your feelings and can support you in transforming your pain by offering you a loving experience.*
-

Erotic Touch

The Bliss of Oceanic Oneness

The orgasm is spontaneous when it happens of itself and in its own time, and when the rest of the body moves in response to it...a melting warmth between the partners so that they seem veritably to flow into each other. To put it another way, "physical lust" transforms itself into the most considerate and tender form of love imaginable.

—Alan Watts

Mel loved Jennifer's feminine form. He found it hard to restrain himself from running his hands over her well-rounded body. The very thought triggered a sensory charge that resulted in the swell of an erection. Jennifer was struck by the blend of strength and gentleness she experienced when Mel touched her and wrapped his arms around her. She loved that her body was arousing to him and acknowledged this by straightforwardly pressing her thigh into his genital area. Strong currents of sensation coursed from her heart throughout her whole body triggering a soft pulse in her vagina: "When we embrace" she said, "I feel like all is right in the world."

Mel found Jennifer's firm contact irresistible, while Jennifer appreciated how Mel knew to caress her whole body giving attention to her most sensitive areas. Together they could clear their minds and focus on their mounting sensations. In Jennifer, an exhilarating quiver rose from her genitals, an expansive softness spreading from her vagina into her belly. These sensations generated a pleasant moistness which became electric when Mel's fingers, attracted to the folds of her labia, traced the opening of her vagina. She took a deep breath and opened her legs ever so slightly. It felt to her as if he held the key to her secret garden, a key that could unlock her inner core. She invited him to enter...

What makes touch erotic? Each individual is unique in his/her erotic preference. Every couple connects on the basis of a mysterious chemistry that is exclusive to their bond. Yet, as with Mel and Jennifer, erotic touch follows an unfolding where awareness, intention, quality of presence, and alternating active and receptive states create deepening waves of mutually gratifying connection.

Although much is written on the stages of erotic arousal, our particular focus is on the development of focused intention and on the quality of attention essential to an attuned

touch that leads to rewarding sexual experiences. Mel and Jennifer have taken the time to learn how to pleasure each other. In their relationship, touch conveys the love and respect they hold for each other. They have cultivated the felt sense awareness necessary to understand their own and each other's somatosensory signals. Mel and Jennifer often set up a special time and place, their "sacred space" where they shut out the world and give each other their full concentration. They enjoy long periods of full body contact alternating between non-genital and genital stimulation. Caressing the areas they know to be most sensitive, in ways they have shared to be arousing, they continue to deepen the trust they have in their physical communication. With the help of Mel's attentive touch, Jennifer has learned to differentiate the sensations originating in her clitoris, G-spot, and cervix so that each can yield its unique orgasmic experience. Oriented to pleasing each other, Mel and Jennifer are always surprised to discover that: "What pleases me pleases you, and what pleases you pleases me." When in alignment and moving together, what is good for one is good for the other.

MOMENTS OF MEETING

Take two cells, place them well separated on the microscope dish, and you will note that they pulsate as a good heart cells should. But they pulse at random, different rates. Bring the two cells closer together, however, and at a certain critical distance, before they touch, they begin to pulse in synchrony, functioning as a miniature heart should. They have arced the gap of separation: they are bonded

—Joseph Chilton-Pierce

The erotic touch encounter can be conceptualized as a three phase process, each phase with its own special touch intention, focus of attention, and experiential intensity.

First Phase

Interactive Attunement and Energetic Bonding

The sexual touch journey begins with an invitation to focus on and enjoy a heightened experience of sensory awareness. Partners reach out to touch as they feel and respond to the desire for skin-to-skin contact. As lovers eagerly explore each other's whole bodies, they progressively find the erogenous areas that are richest in sensory receptors thus following the body's pleasurable responses in a process of *interactive attunement*. For a sexual exchange to reach its full potential, it is important for each partner to attune their touch to the other's contact needs, desires, and sensory expectations. When engaged in creatively touching each other, attentive partners move to match each other's timing, rhythm, and degree of readiness. The specificity of erotic touch, in particular the receptivity of the lips and tongue, nipples, and genitals, enhances the subtle channels that connect all the senses. As the touch attunement progresses, the body becomes increasingly receptive and the couple's contact attunement grows into an *energetic bond*, born of the pleasurable streaming that increases in intensity with each new moment of synchronized attuned touch.

When aligning in this way, a partner's need for nurturing and/or healing might emerge and require attention, diverting attention at least temporarily from the sexual goal. In this intersubjective process of contact attunement, the discrepancies in levels of desire and disjunction in rhythms of movement that indicate a lack of readiness for intercourse need to be acknowledged and tended to. These often point to nurturing and healing needs that, when taken into consideration, continue to deepen the attunement and to support bonding

by increasing the level of trust and respect between partners. Issues that typically arise in this first stage relate to the capacity for attachment and the ability to bond with another: a) difficulties trusting and releasing oneself to the care and desire of one's partner, or b) the relief and joy of finally experiencing the presence of a loving other one can trust. Because they affect the capacity for connection, they cannot be ignored and tending to them in a nurturing, healing way opens the sexual movement toward oneness thereby enlivening the erotic experience.

Second Phase

Intersubjective Phase Shift and Resonance

Once partners have reached a state of somatic trust and interactive attunement, a shift usually happens in the couple's respective felt sense and they each drop into a more acute awareness of their own and each other's erotic sensations. Simultaneously attentive to their own and their partner's responsiveness, a couple experiences an *intersubjective phase shift* signaled by the perceptual dissolution of their skin boundaries. This perceptual dissolution brings attuned partners into an *energetic resonance* where they can no longer feel where one person ends and the other begins. When their energy fields fall in resonance in this way, both parties become aware of a shift in the depth and intensity of their inner experience, often accompanied by a sense of oneness, new imagery, colors, and/or amplified awareness of subtle movements and sensations. At this stage, touch reaches into a level of the body-mind connection where relationship is a common interactive movement. In this state of expanded sensory unity, partners surrender to nonverbal experience and the mind can now let go and ride on the body's pleasurable sensory creativity.

Once a creative process takes form, it reveals an implicit intelligence that knows its own way. Each partner's flow of pleasurable sensations seems to create an equal and similar reverberation in the other. They are engaged in an energetic fusion often glowingly described as "being one," or as the "bliss of oceanic oneness." As in our vignette above, when in alignment and moving together, couples experience that what pleases one pleases the other, what is good for one is good for the other. A couple can choose to bring this state to its culmination in orgasmic discharge and they can, as taught in Tantric sexuality, regulate their state of arousal to infuse the relationship with a sense of highly connected charge.

In this second phase, if a partner is unable to surrender control and let the body armor or the contents of the thinking mind drop away so that they can move into the experience of sensory oneness, a couple's full sexual potential will not unfold. An individual's inability to engage erotically is not necessarily a willful refusal: nonacceptance largely stems from habituated patterns of self-protection and survival in what is perceived as dangerous territory. If the forces allied against acceptance of the partner's touch are too great, it becomes clear that healing is needed, and that erotic touch is not, in that moment, appropriate. A partner who is cut off from the possibility of engaging in the erotic journey needs help to move out of their patterns of psychosomatic dysfunction. At such junctures, it is important to continue offering a caring environment informed by nurturing and healing intents so that the body can have the opportunity to understand that the environment is no longer frightening, dangerous, or neglectful.

Third Phase

Closure and Integration

Once partners feel complete in their erotic exchange, there is again a phase shift. The feelings of intensity drop away, the attuned and resonant phases have come to an end, and a stage of closure and integration begins. In this last phase, sometimes referred to as *afterplay*, the quality of touch again changes as partners bask in a feeling of inner peace and contentment, expressing enjoyment for each other through tender contact and loving words. In the afterglow of the sexual exchange, with bodies replenished, boundaries now need to be reestablished. It is usually at this point that, concurrently with a shift away from the felt sense, the thinking mind naturally rises to the foreground, moving from a focus on the felt sense to a reintegration of each partner's separate felt self identity.

It is important to follow the process of closure to its conclusion. The tendency is to preempt this phase because the energetic intensity has so diminished that to some, it may feel as if nothing is happening. Each partner, having released the high charge of sexual desire now drifts in reverie as the experience of their blended energies continues to revitalize them.

CONCLUSION

I hope to have conveyed the idea that there is much to be gained from the micro-analysis of our touch interactions. The present moment of erotic engagement, constructed from the micro-movements within our touch gestures, leads to a mutual connection at the deepest biological level. Touch is a sensory dialogue which engages the language of the body on its own terms and invites the mind as an observing partner. As a man's penis touches a woman's vagina, the personal merges with the timeless to replay an ancient ritual that has evolved over aeons of time. The erotic touch connection moves through phases of neurological awakenings, following a progression scripted through evolutionary wisdom that culminates in the radiating orgasmic exchange of genes and energy.

Touch is an implicit experience of meeting. In its erotic form, it brings to expression the body's evolutionary intelligence which by far precedes the brain's capacity for verbal communication. In the process of sensual and erotic touch, healthy partners surrender to the innate cellular intelligence of their bodies and revel in the resonance created by their shared attunement. Simultaneously, in the metacommunication where meaning takes form, nonverbal pleasurable visceral experiences translate as a fulfilled sense of being. Emerging out of a genetic desire for immortality, born out of millions of reproductive iterations, touch speaks our need to be loved and wanted. It is through the agency of touch that our continued existence forges itself.

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