

RECLAIMING YOUR SEXUALITY

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During the time of the changing of the millennia, I had the great good fortune of being on the island of Kauai with 400 New Age folk who gathered to learn the ancient ways of the Hawaiians from masters. We were fortunate to be able to sit at the feet of the great Kahuna and Kumu of Hawai'i.

You may be aware of a great revival going on, around the globe. People of every ethnic background are reclaiming their spiritual roots and learning from the ancient ways of their ancestors.

I want to tell you that for women, the cultures of the Great Goddess and their wisdom, that's our roots. Some of what I will be sharing today is what I have learned about the ancient wisdom of these cultures that honored the Divine Feminine. For those of you that are new to the Goddess information, there are cultures that existed for more than 30,000 years and until around 5 to 8000 years ago that were women-centered.

Women's sexual desire in these ancient matrilineal societies was considered an active, powerful erotic drive. Their view of women's sexuality was far more life-affirming. The wisdom of ancient cultures is that *sexual desire is a sacred gift of the Great Mother. In these cultures women were raised to feel plenty of permission to explore their unique pleasure, without judgement, and in a world view that integrated sexuality with spirituality.*

Something else that I learned in that magical week on Kauai is the true meaning of ALOHA. ALO means presence and HA means breath, or life force. So ALOHA means I honor the presence of the life force within you.

AND SO—ALOHA

To the ancients, the Life Force is breath and it is also our sexuality. The ancient wisdom teaches that your sexuality, is a precious expression of the life force. I will be talking more about spiritual sex a little bit later. So I'd like to say that it is one of the most important ways that you can empower your life and your health. **SEXUALITY IS A GIFT. IT IS NOT MEANT TO BE A BURDEN.**

This is the first and most important message from the ancient Goddess cultures. Your sexual desire is to be celebrated, not denied, not repressed and certainly not to be judged by anyone.

The Ancient wisdom is that sex is not purely physical, but a function of body-mind-spirit interaction.

I want to tell you my own story of sexual healing.

20 years ago I left a marriage, deeply scarred because of eight years of an emotional roller coaster with an unfaithful husband. I thought I might never be sexual

again. Celibacy seemed easy. But something happened that changed how I viewed my sexuality. I was visiting the spiritual community of Findhorn in the far north of Scotland. On the night of the summer solstice, I had a powerful erotic dream. That dream left me utterly convinced that sexual energy was indeed Divine Life Force. It led me to an awareness of the spiritual dimension of sex.

I found out later that in that dream, I had participated in the ancient ritual of the sacred marriage. It was my first experience with spiritual sex.

A year later, I had a serious flare up of Crohn's disease. At the time I was released from the hospital I weighed less than eighty pounds. Once I gained some weight and raised my iron level, the doctors planned to perform a permanent colostomy. But shortly after my release, I met a man whose spiritual values were similar to my own. We had both been celibate for some time. The incredible joy I felt with the loving communion of a kindred soul lifted my depression caused by physical and emotional pain. Within that relationship, I had a direct experience of sexual healing that went beyond any ordinary experience of sex. I was infused with a powerful, luminous energy. I became aware of drawing healing from the universe through the energy centers of my body. *That energy seemed to vibrate my cells at a faster rate.*

At times, I lost contact with my physical boundaries and moved into a suspended state of timeless, boundless fusion *with the Life Force.*

The healing I experienced was at all levels: body, mind and spirit. I never did have the surgery and I sustained the remission for many years.

When I returned to my doctor he was astounded at the difference in my physical condition. He actually took me around to his office staff, asked them if they remembered me and everyone marveled at how much I had improved. **The change in my appearance within two months was so drastic that he could hardly believe it.**

He asked me what I had been doing, but I never did tell him the true origin of my recovery. It wouldn't have made sense to him anyway.

My miraculous recovery led me to a new phase of accomplishing goals that were long overdue. I enrolled in a clinical psychology doctoral program. I was fortunate that I was encouraged in my study of mind-body techniques such as visualization, autonomic training, biofeedback, relaxation, guided imagery, and many other alternative methods of healing that were new at the time, yet gaining some attention because they were yielding amazing results with serious illnesses. As I explored the mind-body connection, I did not find references to sexuality as a method of healing until much later when I studied the ancient knowledge that came from the Goddess cultures.

These societies that honored the divine feminine viewed women's development in three stages: THE MAIDEN, THE MOTHER, AND THE CRONE. They are defined by what the ancients called the blood mysteries.

The Maiden, defined by **First Blood**, the Mother beginning with **Childbirth**, and Crone, precipitated by **Menopause**. There are *psychological transformations* within all women. *These are universally transformative events for all women, everywhere and for all times. There are great spiritual lessons in each of these stages*

I'd like you think back to your experiences surrounding your first period, you will remember the lessons it taught you. Some of the lessons may have been very difficult, for

some even traumatic. Some of the experiences may have been very positive but **your first period transformed you into a woman** and there were many lessons from that experience.

Unfortunately, there are many negative influences on women's sexual attitudes and these attitudes can affect our desire. In our culture, both the lack of permission for women to be sexy and the many troubles we have with relationships can rob us of a fully satisfying sex life. The experiences from childhood and adolescence specific to your own history are important pieces to the puzzle and I invite you to use the questionnaire in my book or on my web site, www.goddesstherapy.com.

It will help you to understand your personal story more fully.

Let's begin with a most powerful influence on your sexuality:
YOUR BODY IMAGE.

Since our internal feelings about our attractiveness influence our sexual desire, the more we dwell on negative feelings about how we look, the worse the effect on sexual desire and responsiveness.

We must heal ourselves of our own sex-negative voices

I'd like you to use your imagination. So settle in your chairs for a moment and please close your eyes. Now let's go shopping.

The Bathing Suit Exercise

I'd like you to imagine that you are going to go shopping for a bathing suit. Picture yourself going to your favorite store and entering the store. Be aware of yourself as you approach the rack to choose several styles and colors of suits. Now imagine that you go into a dressing room and remove your street clothes. Then try on several bathing suits. Imagine yourself, as you look at your body in the full-length mirror. Notice the thoughts that are going through your mind. These thoughts will be familiar. They are the automatic thoughts that come up whenever you try on clothes, especially bathing suits.

I'd like you to notice if some of the messages are the same as the critical thoughts you have about other women. For example, when you are out for the evening or any time you are in public, do you think critical thoughts about other women's hair or make-up, clothes, or weight? These may be some of the same critical thoughts that you may say to yourself. Now, just take a moment to give yourself a message of loving acknowledgement. Say the affirmation "***I am a glorious feminine being.***" When you are ready, begin to bring yourself back into this room and open your eyes.

I would love to see us all make a resolution to stop saying critical things about our bodies and realize also that as we criticize other women, we also hurt ourselves. Try to honor the Goddess in every woman by acknowledging the inner beauty in all of us. We all benefit from the supportive thoughts of other women.

Ultimately, we must look within ourselves to the source of our validation and reclaim how we feel about our bodies. We must seek within ourselves a sense of empowerment. Menopause is an especially important time to work on self-validation

because so many CULTURAL MESSAGES focus on the negative aspects of aging.

The least understood stage of women's development is THE CRONE, defined by menopause (actually, the whole period of perimenopause). Today, I'd like to look at this transformational experience in more detail.

First, I'd like to say that the name Crone may make you uncomfortable, but it is an ancient name of honor. It means WISE WOMAN. The period following menopause is what the ancients called WISE BLOOD.

The stage of the WISE WOMAN was in ancient times and is becoming again the most powerful time of our lives.

The Crone stage of life is when you have all the life experience, the knowledge and the wisdom necessary to pursue your own personal path of power.

I WANT YOU TO JOIN ME TODAY IN HONORING this stage of our lives. And I can tell you THE BEST IS YET TO COME.

In preparation for menopause, all women must attend to the transformation process that precedes it, now called perimenopause. This could begin as early as late 30's to 50's. [Dr. Carolle will be talking about this much more in detail] I want to talk to you about the psychological aspects of the Change. Perimenopause is the crucible experience that brings about a new phase of adulthood but it does challenge your sense of self. This is a period of our lives that we must learn to embrace. We are coming to the end of intensive mothering duties and the physical symptoms of perimenopause are a message that you must attend to your own self. The message of your body is to focus your awareness inside yourself.

As far as sex is concerned, the onset of perimenopause may be seen as a fork in the road, one path leading to giving up your sexuality altogether and the other leading to a rebirth of sexual possibilities. Initially, the crisis of menopause symptoms sets off a panic in most women, but we must directly confront our fears of aging.

Too many of us start to assume that we will soon lose our sexual attractiveness. However, it is possible to find new strengths from this transformation. For some women a free and fiercely assertive sexuality can emerge from the confrontation with their health issues.

Unfortunately some women feel that they have little or no desire for sex. When your desire becomes repressed, it becomes buried under layers of old cultural conditioning and past negative experiences. When sexuality becomes dormant you are cut off from an important source of nourishment. But it is like a serpent sleeping and it can be awakened again. And so . . . I'd like you to think about AWAKENING as an important principle for your feminine desire. **Abundant sexual desire is not something you have lost. It is always within your power to reawaken.**

At any stage of life a woman can become cut off from her sexual feelings, much to her dismay as well as to her partner's. Most women tell me they genuinely want to feel

desire for their partners, but they just don't know how.

In the Crone stage of life being *empowered* implies a state of awareness of your internal strengths of emotional capacity, strong will, and an acknowledgement of the wisdom you have gained from your life.

Now I want to tell you something: **Sexy is not synonymous with young.** And here is something that may surprise you: young women are less likely to be comfortable with sex and are less easily orgasmic than older women. You have the possibility of finding an inner confidence in your sexuality that belies the cultural stereotypes of older women.

To gain a feeling of sexual empowerment you will need to view the physical challenges of menopause as a *necessary process*. Then you will benefit from the psychological transformation of menopause. The purpose of this transformation is to strengthen and add insight that facilitates the emergence of your "wise woman."

As we age, we have the power to combine our wisdom with our sensuality to achieve what I call **MATURE EROTIC BEAUTY**.

A valued male friend of mine described what he found sexually attractive about certain older women. He said they seemed to communicate a sense of ease with themselves. Obviously they cared about their health and good grooming but they had clearly found a style that suited their unique sense of self. They exhibit a flair for vibrant and sensual colors and the cut of their clothing compliments their feminine curves.

Most importantly sexually empowered older women glow from within. It was this luminosity that my friend found so enormously attractive.

Beauty in older women stems from our experience with the richness of relationships and our sense of personal authority from a life well lived. The mature erotic woman finds a balance between compassion and her consciously developed independence. Such women possess the quality of harmony with self, valued by women-honoring cultures. Let me give you an example of the Laguna Pueblo People.

There is wonderful article in *The Los Angeles Times Magazine* a few years ago. "**Yellow Woman and A Beauty of the Spirit.**" The author, Leslie Marmon Silko grew up on a reservation and was half Laguna Pueblo. She explains that the Pueblo judged beauty by a person's behavior and their relationships with other living things: people, plants, animals.

No one would have thought of calling a woman beautiful who was mean spirited, self-centered or disconnected from her people. On the other hand, no one would think a woman ugly, no matter what her outward form, if she truly expressed a loving heart. A beautiful person was healthy. To the Pueblo this meant she was in harmony with herself. She was not out of balance with her own best interests.

Silko relates the Laguna myths of Yellow Woman, their powerful goddess who was strong, clever and able to act with courage in times of peril. Yellow Woman never had to resort to destructive violence and used her sexuality creatively to help her People. For example, she forms a liaison with Buffalo Man and thus saves her people from starvation because the Buffalo people agree to give their meat to them.

Like Yellow Woman, beautiful older women continued to grow with their creativity and enthusiastically pursue their path of power.

One of the attributes of mature, erotic beauty is the imaginative enhancement of the woman's natural gifts of attraction using the ancient magic known as *glamour*.

The origin of the word *glamour* is a derivative of the Scottish word, *grammar*, meaning "magic." There is an interesting definition of *glamour* in Webster's Dictionary, "seemingly mysterious allure, bewitching charm." Today the term has come to refer to glittery clothes and make-up. We call movie stars "glamorous" without really understanding the true meaning of the term. The true magic of "glamour" is the enhancement of magnetic attractiveness that is the essence of female sexuality.

You can generate your magnetic energy beyond simple adornment of the face and body. Ultimately, *glamour* is the power to radiate an Inner Light. The secret of your inner radiance is developing your personal spiritual path, your sacred path of power.

Crone women are truly luminous beings of great worth and such beauty as this can only increase with age. This is the promise of mature erotic beauty.

Here is a wonderful affirmation: **I am a sensuous, gloriously sexy woman.**

Let's all say it: **I AM A SENSUOUS, GLORIOUSLY SEXY WOMAN**

I believe that women must reclaim the core of their universal feminine selves. **The Goddess represents the feminine polarity of the Life Force.** She is not outside our experience, but an eternal awareness inside us. The image of the Goddess as *Divine Feminine* is important to us as women. We must **break up the judging, sex-negative image of Divinity** that has dominated for the last five to eight thousand years.

The three stages of life can also expressions of our feminine sexuality.

The Maiden within us is the **playful child**, delighting in the wonder of pleasure and sexual exploration. She is longing to be loved. She is the source of our natural curiosity and sensuality. Her readiness to awaken sexual energy when she feels permission to do what feels good in a safe setting is necessary for your Maiden to come out to play.

The Mother is the **loving nurturer**, bestowing unconditional acceptance on the beloved, and generating compassionate loving beyond self-gratification. She is the source within us of our capacity to build communion with another in the act of giving and receiving sexual pleasure. The Mother in us takes responsibility for seductive conditions so that she can surrender to her body.

The Crone is the **wise woman** within, who can consciously generate healing power. She is the part of us that feels empowered to pursue sexual mastery in an honoring setting. The Crone is the teacher within, encouraging us to listen to intuition and recognize divine guidance in ecstatic experiences of spiritual sex.

There are two essential differences of the feminine approach.

- Pleasure rather than orgasm is central to an erotic encounter
- Sensual touch is the vehicle of pleasure rather than genital performance

I want to give you two principles that are crucial for awakening sexual desire: Readiness and Surrender.

Readiness

How many of you have submitted to a sexual situation with a partner before you were really ready for it?

Here's a typical Scenario: Your husband asks for sex before rising for another busy day. You say to yourself "we don't have much time before work, so what's the harm in a quickie? He'll be much happier and easier to live with." When you do have more time, it becomes too much bother to try to relax enough to complete your own satisfaction. Men often collude with their partners in allowing this accommodation to persist. A husband may say, "are you sure you're okay with this?" The wife reads the signals of his yawns, lack of eye contact, and waning interest after his orgasm. She says, "sure Honey, I just enjoy the closeness." With that he gives her a big hug and tells her what a great wife she is.

The demise of desire can be so subtle that you may not realize you have sabotaged yourself until you have practiced this pattern of ignoring your needs for a long time.

One of the fundamental principles of awakening female desire is to foster the long, slow buildup of sensual feelings and the "banking" of sexual urgency so that the women do not feel rushed into intercourse. The simple concept of waiting for the sense of readiness is fundamental. Desire must build before progressing to a more intense sexual touch.

The Message: YOU are the only source of information about your readiness for any kind of sexual touch. You must *not give in to pressure* to be rushed, simply because your partner's tempo is ten times more rapid than yours. **The pattern of yielding to the male timing, when it becomes chronic, is perhaps the greatest source of the gradual loss of female sexual desire. It begins even in early sexual experiences.**

The second principle is Surrender

Learning to *surrender* to the *body's natural rhythms* means you must honor all the signals. That is:

- 1) Letting go of thoughts and tuning into the sensations of the body.
- 2) Not over-controlling a sexual encounter to allow only rigid or repetitive sexual patterns that may limit spontaneous surrender.
- 3) Allowing sensual feelings to develop by acting in your best interest.

So many conditions of modern life operate against sexual desire that women need all the romance they can get.

One of the best methods to experience surrender to sensations is one you already know: dance. Dancing is a simple way to heal the split between mind and body. You can learn sensual techniques such as breathing together, playful interaction, dancing, and many others that lead to a seductive setting.

The first technique for **SURRENDER is breathing.**

Let's take a moment to practice.

Place your hands on either side of your lowest ribs and begin to breathe slowly and deeply from the diaphragm. With each inhalation push your hands outward. As you exhale, feel your ribcage contracting. Just continue to breathe in deeply, pushing your hands outward as you inhale. And as you exhale feel your ribs contract.

WOMB WISDOM

In order to fully surrender to your body you must attend to your Body Wisdom

AND SO, I'D LIKE TO TAKE YOU ON A JOURNEY INSIDE YOUR OWN BODY to a place deep within you. This is the location in body-mind-spirit, considered by Shaman women to be the source of all feminine power. This is your womb. Even if you have had a hysterectomy it does not matter because the womb is a psychic space, whether you have the physical organ or not.

Settle very comfortably in your chair and close your eyes.

Begin to breathe deeply.

Allow your body to completely relax, feeling it supported by the chair. Just for a moment, squeeze your shoulders up to your ears, make a fist, tighten your arms, and make a face. Squeeze, squeeze, squeeze . . . and let it go. Release all the tension from this top area of your body.

Tighten your chest and abdomen. Squeeze tightly. And then let it go. Now take a deep Breathe and release all the tension from the middle area of your body. Just relax.

Now tighten your buttocks, your thighs and calves, curl up your toes and tighten, tighten, tighten. . . . and let it go.

Just breathe deeply and release all the tension from the lower part of your body. Relax. Imagine yourself breathing in clean, pure air from the top of your head and releasing all your tension out through your feet.

With each breath, feel yourself become more completely relaxed.

As you relax even more, allow the feeling of nurturing energy to flow through your body as if The Great Mother was holding you in Her arms. Feel the comforting touch of the loving arms of a mother.

Begin to move your consciousness into your body, first into the area behind your eyes. Then move your awareness down to your throat. Now bring your awareness into your heart region and breathe in all the warm loving energy you feel in your heart and as you exhale, let this warm energy extend to all those you love. Now move into your belly, below the navel . . . into your pelvic area. As you move your awareness into your pelvic area, feel the void that is your womb. This is the source of your womb wisdom.

Now, choose a color for this space, this womb that is the cradle of life. Then see if you can find a texture for this void. Perhaps it is smooth, or soft, or has a woven

texture. Anything that you can imagine. As you breathe deeply into this area, listen to any sounds that you may hear or words that come to mind. Pay attention to any images that appear. Just allow yourself to experience what comes up, breathing deeply and

staying totally relaxed. The colors, textures, words, images and sounds may shift and change. Just go with whatever emerges for you. Give yourself plenty of time to experience all that your *womb has to offer*.

And now, it is time to bid farewell to this special place, knowing you can return whenever you choose. When you are ready, begin to move your consciousness up through your navel, to your heart, your throat and finally behind your eyes. Bring your awareness to the room and feel your body supported by the chair. Whenever you feel ready, please open your eyes.

For those of you that would like to use this guided process at home, I have tapes available. Just email me at lindasavagephd@goddesstherapy.com and I can send it for \$10 plus \$1 shipping.

[the next section was intended for a group interaction]

I'd like you to turn to the person to one side of you, and take a moment to describe to that person in a few words or phrases the essence of your experience of your journey inside yourself. Just take turns listening to each other.

Okay, please turn to the front for a moment.

What you have just experienced is a mini experiment in the necessary process skills for intimacy.

What you did is have an experience inside yourselves and you told someone your thoughts and feelings about your experience. Then you were silent and listened to your neighbor's experience. The next step if this were an on-going relationship would be to go back inside yourself and notice if what your partner said changed anything for you. Then you would go back outside to share with that person your new awareness, and then listened to any new information from your partner.

As simple as it may seem, the most basic skill you need for intimacy is to give accurate, unfiltered information to your partner and to listen to information from your partner without judgement.

A balanced partnership is essential for sustained sexual desire.

Some of you may yearn for relationships that offer more diverse options for a new intimacy in a more balanced equation. I have found that all women seek individual self-expression and yearn for intimacy in relationships yet they do not want to have to choose between the two.

NOW LET ME DEFINE INTIMACY

Definition of Intimacy: The desire to know and be known by another

The desire to know and be known by your partner means that you will work at telling each other about your thoughts, feelings, and desires, and you will continue

opening yourself up to new information from your partner. Not only will you express your deep emotions and thoughts, without filtering information, but also you will remain silent, and listen to your partner's feelings or views without judgment.

I'd like to sum up the goals for all intimate communication in three rules:

- 1) Express your feelings congruently, say what you mean, mean what you say
- 2) Give information in a non-blaming way, and
- 3) Request information from your partner. ***Ask for information, rather than assume your partner's feelings. And that means no Mind Reading***

Let's spend the last few moments talking about SPIRITUAL SEX

How many of you have had any experience with something you might have called sexual ecstasy or spiritual sex?

You are in good company. Sex researcher and therapist Gina Ogden launched a study in cooperation with New Woman Magazine in 1999. More than 1,400 women responded. She found that 91% of women over 40 said that they had experienced sexual ecstasy or spiritual sex.

They described experiences such as "feelings of oneness with the universe during orgasm," having out of body travel while making love, weeping with the joy of sexual bliss, being enveloped with a loving light, and touching souls with the partner. My own spiritual sex experience was a most compelling direct encounter with universal healing energy, and there were moments of boundless, timeless existence in "light/energy."

Clearly, many women are having such experiences and are willing to talk about them. The descriptions of sexual ecstasy sound quite similar to near death experiences in some ways. There are many pathways of spiritual discovery and sexuality is one.

We are on a new frontier of research which brings in the so-called paranormal as part of eroticism. It is also an ancient knowledge.

The ancient Goddess cultures held the view that sexuality was both a healing energy and a pathway to raising the consciousness. *The ancients believed that ecstatic union with the Source of the Life Force was the ultimate expression of sexuality.*

There were priestesses who were initiated into the truth about this mystery of sexual energy. These women were able to use sex for sacred purposes in the temples of the Goddess. How many of you have heard of so-called "temple Prostitutes?" The temple priestesses were called the sacred virgins. Those who served the Great Mother were "women unto themselves" free of marital bonds. (This is the original meaning of virgin.) These women were practicing healing and initiating others into the sexual pathway towards a more expanded consciousness.

The Sacred Virgins practiced Sexual Mastery, which is the conscious development of the spiritual sex as a sacred path. Exploring sexual mastery can rejuvenate sexual desire and you can tap into the healing and spiritual aspects of sex.

Many experiences I have written about in the book discuss the healing and consciousness expanding possibilities of sex. Spiritual sex may be experienced as

extraordinary light, luminous colors, and feeling a loss of the sense of a physical body and even described the sense of merging with universal energy.

Clearly spiritual sex encompasses sexual energy that goes beyond physical sensations of pleasure. It incorporates the deeply loving connection of sexual communion and it also includes additional aspects of sexuality. Such experiences as:

Healing the body-mind-spirit.

Projecting visual imagery.

Divining *visions* and

Balancing the genders through joining with universal energy.

This is a new yet ancient area of exploration that some of us are interested in understanding more about. For example, there is an increased interest in Tantra, Danika, Quodoushka, and Kundalini Yoga to name a few spiritual sex practices that are being taught currently. In the new Millenium, I hope to see a re-emergence of the life-affirming pathway of spiritual sex.

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