Intimacy & Mindfulness

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**Exercise One, Solo Lovin:**

*The following exercise is designed to bring your focus and attention to your body through connection to breath. Read through this once or twice so that you can practice this with your eyes closed. May you feel yourself deeply and completely.*

Close your eyes. Notice the natural flow of air in and out of your nose. Be curious about the sensations that your breathing creates within your body. Begin to breathe deeply into your abdomen, allowing your tummy to expand as your lungs fill. We focus that breath upwards, allowing our chest to expand as our ribcage widens to accommodate ever-filling lungs. At the top of the breath, we breathe into the space in our upper chest, causing our collarbones to lift slightly. We want this full inhalation to last for 8-seconds, so adjust as needed and repeat.

The 8-count exhalation begins at the top of the breath, allowing the shoulder blades to fall slightly and our shoulders to roll back gently. We bring our awareness down as our chest begins to fall, and our abdomen pulls in as the air releases from our tummy.

If your mind has drifted, gently, non-judgmentally, bring the awareness back to the sensations of the breath. If you need to shift, scratch, or adjust in some way, take a pause before the movement to consciously decide when and what to do.

Again, the breath begins in the stomach. Feel the belly expand. Move the breath upwards into the chest and feel your lungs inflate, opening your ribcage. Your collarbones lift and open at the top of the inhalation. The exhalation causes your collarbones to relax and your shoulders to roll back slightly. Your chest, then ribs, and then your stomach pull inwards as your release the air fully.

Repeat four more times.

When you are ready, open your eyes and take a moment to notice what you notice. What sounds, sights, smells, and sensations are present and surrounding you? Take some time and decide how you want the day to go. Be intentional with it.

*Practices such as this will help us strengthen the neural connections that will allow us to be present and calm so that these mental states are more accessible when we are highly charged, such as during lovemaking and times of stress. Mindful sex ensures that the insula, the part of the brain most directly involved in self-awareness, interpersonal relations, and movement, stays active. What we use, we strengthen, and mindfulness practices are workouts for the parts of the mind that allow us to be more deeply present and connected, making us better lovemakers.*

***With a partner (or several):***

*We want to create an atmosphere that engages the senses and tantalizes the mind. Take time to get in touch with your bodies, allowing at least thirty minutes—fifteen minutes each—to connect with each other’s bodies. This experience is one that is designed to tantalize the senses. Be playful, be curious, be creative; be present.*

**Awaken the tactile touch.** Take a feather or soft brush (I enjoy the sensation of faux fur.), and trace circles and lines over the face, neck, shoulders, chest, breasts, nipples, tummy, hips, genitals, thighs, feet, soles gradually and with focused attention. Notice how you and your partner respond to the changes in touch. What feels exciting? What do your want to happen again? Both the actor and receiver should share points from their experience.

**Awaken our oral perception.** Select a few foods, herbs, or spices that interest you and arrange them on a plate. I enjoy honey, ginger candy, and cubes of thawing mango. Covering your eyes with a sleep mask or soft scarf can help us tune into the sense of taste. With eyes covered, offer each yummy bite to your partner, one by one. Really experience how your mouth turns on ever cell in your body. This extraordinary sense can cause toes to curl and hairs to stand. Notice what you notice.

**Arouse our sense of smell.** The nose, a powerful sensory organ, tells us when to be turned on our off by subconsciously and consciously transmitting signals to the brain through our sense of smell that signal what and who is arousing or not. Again, covering the eyes to allow for focused attention on this one sense is encouraged. Play around with various scents, from fresh flowers to essential oils and favorite perfumes. Practice bringing attention to the breath by breathing deeply and completely. You and your partner can inhale and exhale simultaneously to further deepen your connection to one another and the experience.

**Play with the sensations of movement and pressure.** See what it feels like to be held, cradled, and gently rocked. Be light and playful with fast, gentle bounces. Enjoy the comfort of slow, steady movements. Embrace one another in a close hug by having one partner gently step onto the tops of the other’s feet distributing the weight evenly while wrapping your arms around one another. Have everyone involved reveal what this awakened within the body and mind.

*While this exercise need not be inherently sexual, it often awakens our sensual energy as various parts of our being get to be aroused. Enjoy whatever arises from this stimulating exploration and contact.*