

# Tantra: A Way of the Heart

Heart Thought 19, 6/5/08

by Nicholas de Castella

Susan and I were fortunate to attend a Tantric Seminar early in our relationship. It set a tone for the way we live our relationship. This has allowed us to continue, over the last 11 years, to keep our relationship fresh and alive and to continue to open our hearts and deepen our connection with ourselves and each other and provide a loving environment for our children to grow up in.

By way of introducing our forthcoming Tantric Seminar (in 2 weeks time), today I would like to share with you the Tantric approach to life.

What is Tantra?

Tantra is a way of living that acknowledges the divine in all things, the perfection of life and the possibility of experiencing peace and happiness in each moment: awakening to a way of living that is Nirvana - Heaven on Earth.

Though Tantra in the west has become associated with sexuality, true Tantra is a way of living that is continually opening our hearts and enriching our experience of wholeness and aliveness.

*“Tantra is the science of increasing awareness to expand consciousness. It is the force of the living universe expressing itself through you. No one can claim to own universal energy ... we can only discover the profound joy and beauty of merging with it”. Editor, Tantric Magazine.*

The original ‘Tantrikas’ were Brahman rebels. Brahmans are the highest cast of the Hindu Religion - the priests. They have strict rules of conduct. The Tantrikas broke away from these strict rules with the purpose of proving that spiritual experiences could be found in everything. They wanted to transcend duality (opposites: good / bad, right / wrong) to find the divine in all things.

For me the lovely thing about Tantra is it’s approach to life is virtually the same as the Heart Centred Living approach we practice. Thus we call the Tantric work we teach ‘Heart Tantra’ The qualities we aspire to live with in Tantra and when we open our heart are: respect, patience, playfulness, ease, compassion, kindness, forgiveness, mercy, trust, courage, discipline, vulnerability, humility, devotion and service to others.

Its a matter of attitude

The main emphasis in Tantra is to live in the present moment with an attitude of: ‘This is as good as it gets’. Practising making the best of this moment, instead of trying to make this moment into the best moment ever. We can not always ensure what happens in life, but we can learn to develop positive responses to whatever happens that make the best of it.

This shift happens through a shift in our attitude. When we change our attitude our perception and hence experience of the world changes. If my attitude to this moment is ‘I had better hurry up, because there is never enough time’ I will likely experience my time as stressful. If on the other hand I have an attitude of ‘Everything will unfold in it’s own perfect timing’ then things will most likely flow easily and I will have an enjoyable time.

Our world is affected by our attitude for two reasons. Firstly because our attitude leads

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us to behave in certain ways that tend to reinforce what we are feeling. For example if I am distrustful of people, they will tend to be more guarded around me. Secondly, we filter what happens in accordance with our attitude. We have all heard of looking at the world through rose coloured glasses. If we think that the world is a place filled with violence then we will tend to be more aware of the violence around us. If we live with gratitude, we will tend to be more aware of the good things happening around us.

There are eight aspects of Heart Tantra:

#### 1. Cultivating love: Creating spaces for Love to flourish.

We live in a busy, busy culture, full of pressure and stress. It is very difficult to relax and open our heart and feel soft and loving when we are stressed. So the first step is to take some quality time (put it in your diary) to set up a space for love to flourish in. Susan and I have Monday afternoons just for nurturing our relationship.

Exercise: Book some time into your diary for nurturing your relationship.

#### 2. Living in the present:

The Tantric approach is to practise being in the here and now. Letting go of expectations about what is going to happen next and instead opening and allowing things to unfold of the present moment.

This also involves embracing all our experiences with willingness and openness. Sometimes when faced with intensity of feelings (including positive ones like love or joy) we get frightened and close off and try to push the feelings away. This causes our feelings to feel harsh and uncomfortable. The practice of 'Welcoming in' involves learning to stay relaxed and open with increasing levels of intensity.

Exercise: Practice living in the present moment, breathing into your body consciously and letting things unfold moment to moment.

#### 3. Happiness:

Strangely enough, we have a lot of social taboos, guilt and shame about being happy and experiencing pleasure. Sometimes it can seem like a sin to enjoy ourselves. I recently heard from a woman who's grandmother would not let her laugh on Fridays! If we want our life to be filled with happiness then we must give ourselves permission to be happy, otherwise we will sabotage the good times. A basic premise that our work is based on is that at our essence we are already peaceful, happy and whole.

Exercise: Write a short list of things that make you happy and do one each day.

#### 4. Heart Centred Relating:

Truly fulfilling experiences arise out of deep states of connection with ourselves and others. For us to be able to experience such connection we must be able to relax, centre ourselves, open our heart and share what we are feeling.

Exercise: Sit down with your partner or friend and risk sharing how you are feeling.

#### 5. Savouring the Moment

Savouring the moment is about heightening the experience of greater pleasure through our senses. In the business of life we often are not fully present enough to appreciate the rich experiences that are right here. Many people eat a whole meal and barely taste it. Savouring the moment is about remembering to stop and look around us at the colours, smell the aromas, feel the air on our skin, listen to the sounds and really

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experience being alive.

Exercise: Go out for dinner by yourself and really savour the meal, the wine, the coffee...

#### 6. Increasing Aliveness:

In Tantra we practice raising and circulating life force (Kundalini) energy through the body. We do this through awareness, breath and movement.

Exercise: Put your favourite dance music on and really let go into the dance.

#### 7. Liberation:

This involves transcending our ego by going beyond the 'me-me' into the 'I' that is we. Shanti Deva, a renowned Buddhist monk, said: 'All misery in the world comes from people trying to make themselves happy, and all true happiness comes from people wanting others to be happy'. Too often we see people who are trying to make themselves happy only becoming more self-centred and miserable. Our ego is concerned with being in control, getting acceptance and approval from others and ensuring its survival. Liberation happens when we realise that we are not our ego...

Exercise: Go out of your way to help someone and notice how you feel.

#### 8. Honouring:

Heart Tantra is based on a strong foundation of deep respect and honouring of ourselves, each other and all of life. In our consumer culture it is easy to forget how blessed we are to experience and share such a wonderful human life. Heart Tantra reminds us to regularly stop and acknowledge the extraordinary in the ordinary.

Exercise: Make a point of appreciating the people around you. Tell them the things you admire about them and how grateful you are that they are in your life.

This concludes my brief introduction to the world of Tantra. I do hope you have found it useful and inspiring. Obviously Tantra is a practice that has to be lived to be fully appreciated. Maybe you could pick out one of the eight aspects and practice it today.

We (Nicholas and Susan) are familiar with the challenges of keeping love and passion alive in our relationship amongst the pressures of modern life (including running our own business and parenting our two young sons: Charles (6) and Alexander (4) ).

Heart Tantra gives us a lovely, enjoyable way to continue to deepen our intimacy and connection and helps us to keep the spark of love and passion in our relationship".

I do hope you will explore these ideas in more detail and maybe join us for one or both of the 2 days of our Heart Tantra Seminar (May 17 & 18) in Clifton Hill.

If you would like more information about the Heart Tantra Seminar you can download a copy of the Brochure at:

[http://www.breathwork.com.au/PDFfiles/Elements of Tantra.pdf](http://www.breathwork.com.au/PDFfiles/Elements%20of%20Tantra.pdf)

We wish you peace, love and happiness,

**Nicholas and Susan de Castella**

[Home play this week](#)

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Choose one of the exercises and practice it this week.

Any questions? Let me know how you go.

May the peace, love, happiness and contentment in your heart abound in the world.

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P.S. I have formatted the Heart Thoughts as pdf's you can download from my website at:  
<http://www.breathwork.com.au/heartthoughts.htm>