

When did your thinking undergo its transformation? You seem to suggest it was while you were entering motherhood...

I will quote Hank Moody from „Californication”, with one of his best punch lines – “Parenthood was the most wonderful and the most tormenting experience of my life”. You see, I had a complicated pregnancy, lost my job and got stuck at home, unable to do much as walk around my own apartment, overwhelmed by how physical the experience of pregnancy actually was. Then things just kept getting worse. After I gave birth, I struggled with all that emotionality so different from the world of control and order I had previously been used to. It was a whole other dimension. At first, I couldn't get my head around it at all. Now, I can say that if it wasn't for the support of my partner, I don't know what would have happened. I couldn't muster up the resources with which to bounce back, not even months and months after I gave birth.

And yet, along with all help I received, physical activity also turned out to be very important. When my son was almost two years old, I signed up for a diving course and went to Egypt. The strange thing was I couldn't actually swim, never having really liked water. I really don't know what made me do it. But when I dove into Red Sea, my whole world was turned upside down.

Those two experiences, motherhood and diving, unblocked all that which I now know was trapped and bottled up within me. It was like a cork shooting from a bottle of champagne. Bang! – all that which had been locked up inside was suddenly freed.

In what way? It all sounds very abstract.

Actually, it is all very much specific, even if it does belong to the sphere of experience, rather than intellect. And that's why such moments of breakthrough are hard to describe. Those who haven't experienced their own body opening up would have trouble grasping what I am talking about. They can understand the sentence which describes it, but the difference is like that of reading about an orgasm and actually having one.

I suspect, that the point of discontinuity, either as a result of accident or planning, when everything starts to work differently, can only be described adequately by the language of poetry. It is, of course, possible to depict the enhanced experience in scientific terms. During aquatic sensory deprivation you

are weightless, suspended in space. Your body is desensitized. You can't hear anything other than your own breathing, can't see things clearly, your skin stroked by the gentle, steady caress of water. Your pulse slows and the breath becomes deeper, as you calm down. This is what is called the dolphin effect.

It is incredible to experience the change in tension in the muscles around the spine. Core muscles usually work very hard to strain against gravity and keep us upright, but in the water they loosen and you feel like you are dissolving. The silence also soothes your body and your mind. It is rare that we enjoy that sort of serene emptiness anywhere else. It is where you can hear what your own body is whispering to you.

And this helps us connect with it?

Yes, but it's not the only way. Let's say that paths are multiple but the destination is the same. All the paths guiding us to reconnection with our bodies are united by one quality – a state of “flow”, a kind of silent euphoria. It happens when you experience nothing but the moment, your mind is quiet and the body is fully relaxed, open for sensual experiences. This is the way humans are entering pleasure – through the body not by thinking.

This may seem like an obvious thing, but for many it is easier to feel arousal than to transform it into pleasure and delight. Pleasure and delight are highly demanding states and all of those who suffer sexual challenges know it well. We need to give up control, agree to expose ourselves emotionally.

Why is this calm and quiet mind so important? When you realize that our brains are in an informational and emotional fever, you will also see that this mental chaos we are living in, always demands new sensations, new stimulations. It can be shopping, psychoactive substances, pornography. But we will never be happy and fulfilled only because of a new pair of shoes. We need to calm the mind down and then enter the body, truly discover the self.

Do you remember me saying how men are raised to cut themselves off from emotions, and women from their sexuality? Of course, this is a generalization, because you can find examples of men who are emotionally in tune and women who are sexually enlightened – but I am talking about a certain trend, in that neither side will derive full enjoyment from sex if they are stuck with what their imperfect upbringing has left them with. Women will approach their

relationships with unrealistic expectations, get bogged down in idealized scenarios, romantic myths. Then, a few years later, they come to realize that men are only interested in sex. While men treat women and their emotional needs like they come from a distant planet, mainly thinking about how to score another sexual conquest. For both sexes the path to recover the missing elements requires re-connection with the body. Men may feel more and understand more from their emotional landscapes, women may experience sex as a physical not only emotional act.

In our way back into ourselves we have to constantly be aware of cultural cliches which label some things as masculine – such as mountain climbing or diving – and some as feminine – such as dance and yoga. During my workshops it became clear that even the ways in which we think about contact with female and male bodies are different. For women, adjectives such as sensitive, delicate & soft, dominate. While for men it tends to be decisive, effective, powerful.

It is as if a person – regardless of gender – couldn't gently and yet effectively give their own body attention and care: eat healthily, move in order to experience the joy of motion, find a connection with nature and sensory inputs. Pleasure has no gender. Becoming a mother and a diver helped me re-connect with my body and introduced qualities into my life which were absent before. Even though one is feminine, the other theoretically masculine. It's worth trying to find balance in our process of maturing.

Women often feel something opposite to what you describe. They believe that motherhood takes their bodies away, makes them more closed up.

Yes, this often happens.

And yet an experience which for many women is difficult, even traumatising, released something within you.

But this is not the rule and I am glad you mention that. Many women miss an aspect of themselves which should be the most natural thing in the world, but isn't. There are many reasons I could list: starting with the industrialisation of pregnancy and labour, through to personal fears, the support the mother does or doesn't get, from the father of the child or significant women – like their mother

or grandmother.

And yet an additional, invisible burden is the pressure caused by expectations and norms which the woman is subject to, in order to be seen as a good mother. These demands encompass both the way in which she looks after the child, feeds it, even how she reacts to it, and the woman she is to become.

Although it is generally agreed that single women can be active sexually – they are, after all, looking for husbands – when it comes to mothers there is a cultural censorship of the topic. I travel a lot and everywhere I go I hear the same stories: that sex after childbirth fizzled out, that the husband goes on expecting it, that the woman has to force herself in order for the relationship to survive.

Mothers are absolutely exhausted, many of them left without support and understanding. This is one side of the coin. But there is also a paradox – even if the mother has a lot of energy she can invest in sex, she often chooses not to. Sometimes, because it can be seen as “inappropriate”. Sometimes it is the environment which “expects” that she will behave “accordingly” to within her new social position. But most of all the censorship takes place all by itself in the minds of the women. We are still hounded by the idealised image of the “perfect mother” – surrendered to the family, humble and pure. As if all the children came from immaculate conception.

And where do children come from?

Sex. It's that simple. The future mummy does “it” with the future daddy, and then a child comes from inside mummy. Many forget that the primal relationship should not come second to the children. Kids are important, they should be cared for with unconditional love and care, but not used as a shield to hide behind.

This sounds worrying...

It's very worrying that people who fall in love and decide to have children then forget about one another, about the actual point of being together. How many times do we hear men's voices complaining about how their partners, the mothers of their offspring, completely forget about fathers and instead focus on children with almost religious reverence? Are they all lying? I don't think so. Rather, they are trying to describe their own frame of mind, their fear that they

are no longer important. That they have been reduced to the role of a cashpoint or house help. I can see that there are men who don't feel any sense of responsibility, to the family but also, let's not forget that it's possible to confuse motherhood with devotion. If you think back to what we discussed in the first chapter – that sex for many women doesn't go hand in hand with real pleasure and is a reason for many fears – then you will see how useful a child can be as an excuse to withdraw from sexual activity. This also allows us to see how many women's decision to become sexually passive looks from an other side.

Let's agree, however, that the appearance of a child is a challenge to both parties. Both have things to gain and things to lose.

It is obvious that the birth of the child brings huge changes and challenges for everyone. The relationship can reach a completely different level or run aground. You need to see a relationship as a separate being. It has no ID or insurance number but is alive and needs caring for regardless. Both partners are responsible for what is happening with it, exactly as they are obligated to take a good care of the child. Abandoned and without reinforcement the relationship is going to die.

In the same time both men and women meet their challenges and you can see it in the example of the wives, partners of so-called “alpha males” – dominant, imposing men – who are indeed very attractive sexually, but can become tiresome, especially if we try to tame and tie them down, to domesticated them.

It often happens that sessions in my office are arranged by men who want to resolve the problems with sex in their relationship. According to them, the woman must be responsible for the death of intimacy, because she is the one who is not interested in sex. To their surprise, they learn with time that they are also involved in this process. How does it work? A woman who is lives in a relationship with a dominating male, for whom cohabitation is something they only know from movies, has to contend with many challenges he simply doesn't notice. She is facing problems with her subjectivity because her partner tends to make decisions without including her, tends to use negative and derogative forms of verbal communication, does not respect her individuality. Meanwhile, the man simply wants sex to be there – after all, sex is good. Why should he suffer? But for this woman the right to say “no” can be the last bastion of her own, individual self.

She refuses because otherwise she'll be dominated?

Yes, and this isn't any sort of revenge, only a battle to secure a space within which to exist. The more he presses, the more she refuses. How could she afford any sort of sexual availability and openness when he doesn't treat her as a partner, a human being with her own needs and fears. This dynamic shows also that if we only see ourselves, our chances for good sex and intimacy, decreasing rapidly.

Let me get back to women's withdraw from sexuality. It would be good if women – in becoming mothers – began confronting the truth about their sexuality.

And what if after I giving birth I don't have any sort of particularly bad opinion about sex, but my body has changed and lovemaking no longer brings me the pleasure it once did?

There are things we cannot change. Stretch marks are one of those things, no matter what the cosmetics companies say. But if we talk about the body in sex, in the context of shape and vaginal tension, then it is high time to start Kegel exercises and work on the PC muscles. Besides, this sort of exercise can also be recommended for men.

I admit, I've heard about this technique among women, but had no idea that men should also be practicing it.

More is said about women taking this up, especially in the context of pregnancy and childbirth, but the PC muscle and the pelvic diaphragm are shared by both sexes. Their description and the ideas for developing them come from the American doctor Arnold Kegel, hence we often talk about what are now known as “Kegel exercises”.

You can train on your own – by tightening and loosening muscles – or with special equipment, geisha balls or ben-wa balls, being the most well-known type. There are even devices coming together with a smartphone app, which measures the effectiveness of exercises and the progress we make. There are also exercises in yoga, pilates which activate this area, and something new –

Cantienica, a form of training dedicated solely to the muscles of the so-called pelvic floor.

So, please once again tell me how to use the balls. Because, clearly, we know where they should be used, but as to how to use them in exercises – less so.

The balls, placed in the vagina, create resistance when we tighten our muscles. This is the same sort of movement as used on fitness classes – muscles work better when they encounter resistance. Exercising with the balls rather than without them is more effective, also because the balls vary in terms of size and weight. The smaller they are, the heavier they tend to be and the harder it is to keep them inside the vagina. The balls were invented by geishas, elegant ladies from Japan's elite social circles, who came up with the device in order to train their pelvic floor muscles to absolute perfection.

How often should I practice in order to become a geisha?

Every day. It's like brushing your teeth, and should become part of any woman's regular hygiene routine.

But do you advise doing so in the privacy of our own homes?

Not necessarily. You can wear them while taking a walk, shopping, even during a boring meeting at work. This last solution is particularly pleasant. All you need is half an hour with them a day, or every second day and after three months you will see a definite improvement. Pelvic floor muscles not only help intensify our orgasms, they increase the sensations we feel during sex and also help reduce the impact of physical ailments common to women, such as incontinence . The balls can also help us be in touch with our femininity, something many of my clients happen to discover once they start using them.

And is there anything their partners can also train with?

A thick terry towel.

Pardon me?

A small towel, precisely folded up along its longest side (laughter). We drape it over the penis once it is erect and try to hold up it. This helps maintain resilience of the relevant group of muscles. Once you know which muscles are to be held you can exercise them to learn how to control length of time the erection lasts. All taoist and tantrist techniques, like control over impending ejaculation or orgasms without ejaculating, require efficient PC muscles.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to warn people against doing Kegel exercises while urinating. This is a bad idea, which can lead to health problems, especially among women, because our urethra is short and broad and trying to stop the flow of urine can lead to inflammation or infection. Another, important thing to be remember that we have to mind about relaxation of the muscles as well as about constructing them.

What else don't we know about our bodies, and yet is useful when thinking about sex?

“Will you teach us some tricks”? How I love that question! I am often asked for this sort of advice, to reveal some of the mystery, give away secrets which can then be used to blow people's minds in the bedroom. I just think it's funny.

Are you trying to tell us that there are no techniques, no pointers at all?

Of course there are, but no single technique which works well during sex can become a magic spell. I am reminded of an episode of tv series “Ally McBeal”, when lawyers are talking about the secret of a special pressure point beneath the knee meant to cause women to have guaranteed and cosmically intense orgasms. This is too bizarre for words!

There are some truly astounding things about our bodies which we fail to notice. Often, when I talk about these, I see the disappointment on people's faces, because they find it all so obvious and familiar. There is no magic in it. The discovery of one's own fascia, proprioception, enhancement of the senses – these are the fantastic techniques we all should be practicing.

I don't recognize half those words – please explain some of these complicated terms, because they do sound completely asexual.

The assumption is that we possess more than the five basic senses. And I am not talking about the famous sixth sense – intuition, which is also useful in having great sex because it helps us avoid the wrong sort of partner. What I mean is that we have at our disposal additional “superpowers” which have only recently been described and studied. Neurologists are working on all the mysteries of proprioception, the inner, physical experience of our physical body in three dimensional space. This fascinating field of research is producing more and more information about the foundations of our experience, of how we know we happen to be occupying a given place, be it standing up or lying down. Proprioception gives us extra information about our bodies – position, movement, sense of pressure, weight, effort. It works due to receptors located in the muscles. Research done in the 1960s and 70s show that muscle fibers respond to changes in the length and intensity of muscle function and send this information to the central nervous system through sensory neurons. This information also includes the location of nearest joints, though joints have their own receptors. The skin too has its own network of receptors which send information about the position of limbs and the rest of the body. The whole system functions even when we are at rest. What is more, our nervous system is receiving information about increased stresses to the body, the force which we use to carry out certain tasks or sets of tasks, and the effort which our body has to make. All this info is sent up to the brain which transforms them into coherent and comprehensible data. This is how we can sense where our hands are even in complete darkness. Or we know that riding uphill on a bicycle demands we put in more work than riding downhill.

In truth, being able to sense your whole self on the level of the mechanics of movement is a lot more complicated than it might seem. And it helps in sex, because proprioception is essential to the optimal development of reactions – planning and conducting movement, regulating the work of muscles and their tension, the coordination of how those muscles deliver work, and also connecting it all with higher mental functions. Proprioception gathers our existing experiences in the field of a given activity and allows us to perfect it every single time we attempt this. Which means every single time we try something new about sex and practice it successfully, our bodies learn something they can then use the next time. Even if we aren't successful in a given experiment and try

again, the body will remember how it was done and will do its best to succeed a second time.

What is this fascia and how is it related to sex?

This a network of connective tissue which covers out our whole, internal body and organs. It connects all the elements and is also responsible for part of our motor functions – the transformation of the work muscles perform, into movement and posture. Fascia can be imagined as a web which goes through the muscles, bones, nerves and bodily organs. It creates our three-dimensional structure, influences our posture, the shape of the body and – what is more – it also affects how and where the body stores its fatty deposits.

A simple example of how it functions is when you sit for too long in front of a computer, hunched over, your legs crossed up, then when you get up you feel pain and a dull stiffness across the body – this is actually your fascia “complaining”.

I'm afraid that at least half of us experience some form of pain when working at our desks. I thought, however, that this was because of our spines.

It takes years for the spinal column or the intervertebral discs to degenerate. Before that it is the fascia which experiences discomfort when we are motionless or sitting in unhealthy positions. Scientist are starting to realize that the fascia is a giant informational matrix in our bodies, and how far it extends.

There are two kinds of fascia – the superficial and the deep. The first is found beneath the skin and is connected with subcutaneous fat, arteries, veins, the lymphatic and the nervous system. The deep fascia surrounds the muscles and connects them with other muscle groups and the skeletal structure. It is constructed from collagen fibers and has the tendency to attract water molecules in order to ensure optimum hydration. The fluidity of our fascia is very important, seeing as it allows us to move freely and for muscles and internal organs to rub easily over each other. The level of fluidity is also dependent on how hydrated our bodies are, as well as the physical activity we are involved in.

Fascia has a direct connection to the way we feel through the body, and specifically with the way in which the body reacts to certain emotions and states. For example, if for years we have been made to feel afraid and been humiliated

frequently, we can hunch over in a specific way, hiding the head between the arms. Although the body's posture has been altered, along with the way the muscles are set, everything began when the fascia became stiffer and shortened as a result of the strong emotional influence and physiological reaction related to it. This posture will then make it harder for us to move around, blocking other sections of fascia and muscles around the spine, causing us to not only walk in a specific way, but become susceptible to certain injuries, have difficulty performing certain tasks, leading in time to certain disfigurements and other malfunctions. Our whole way of life also has a very strong influence on the way the patterns of strain influence our muscle and fascia systems.

What's more, every accident, broken bone and operation changes the shape of our fascia, because the place where it loses its coherence has to be reconstructed and therefore thickens. Because it is layered in strips across the human body, which all align to work together, as a result of, say, a broken ankle, the layers in the leg become weakened, which then has a direct influence on the hips and even as high up as the arms.

The topic of fascia also has a direct influence on our sex lives, because the layers which cut across the pelvis are usually tight and stiff, directly affecting the sensations we experience in our nether regions.

And what can one do about such a rock-hard fascia?

We use movement to loosen it up, but we can also perform various exercises, get massages or even physiotherapies. Delicate stretching or practices such as pilates and yoga are a great way to get the fascia active. The same goes for special massages or fascia therapy, although these are not the nicest of things. Fascial manipulation is especially recommended for those who have been through operations, injuries or caesarian sections.

I talked to a fascia therapist and was told that she sometimes has customers who, while working on specific areas of their fascia, experience regret, sadness or anger. Even though they came to have their hips or their spines healed, they gained access to emotions which had been frozen within their bodies many years before. An active, fully functioning fascia is not just about ever more effective training, improved posture or resistance to numerous ailments, but a chance to relax the places which we cannot reach by massage alone. If the body finally has the chance to restore its natural shape, to free up, then it will also perform

differently during sex.

All those treatments lead to our bodies feeling better overall. You said it was also about intensifying sensations? Anything else?

It's worth considering training our senses as a broadening of the ability to respond to received inputs. Why it makes difference? We are often content with what we can perceive without actual noticing what is around us. That's why we are quickly getting tired, bored with new clothes, cars. People, events, things become dull with time and that's why we are constantly struggling to find new piece of wardrobe, new angles of sex, a new partner.

This is the easiest option but it is not certainly the best. Instead, we can excite our brains in a way that it constantly feels that something fresh is happening. We do it by activating senses other than sight, by putting to work all that which nature has equipped us with. Alongside our eyes, we also have our ears, noses, our fingers and tongues.

I can already see a cheap date scenario in which we are invited to lick chocolate off the bodies of our lovers. Please tell me there is more to it.

I will do, but we're not going to avoid simple things when we talk about the senses – we just have to get on with it. Notice that our perception is not objective, all informations reaching our brain are already “preconditioned”. And yes, you do already have some convictions associated with the images of a “passionate lover licking chocolate off their partner's body”. You know that it is rather coarse and not your style. The thing is, you've probably never tried it, because from the first time you heard about the use of chocolate in bed you developed the conviction that is in “bad taste”. Unfortunately, sex doesn't follow the same rules as, say, fine art. We can be titillated or even aroused by something which seems in poor taste.

I encourage everyone to perform tests on their senses without any sort of censorship. Not until we can truly learn things will we be able to actually say what does it for us and what doesn't – such as that the smell of lavender during bath time does nothing for us, because we are instead totally excited by the smell of damp soil and moss.

And what works for you – lavender or musky scent of earth?

I'm at the stage where the smell of lavender and damp soil, peat as well as expensive perfume move me to similar degrees. Because I allow this to happen. I allow myself to be captured, seduced by sensations which reach me every day.

Just this summer, I was taking part in an event organized by three enthusiasts – a well known chef, who follows the in the “slow food” style, a woman who specializes in aromas (a so-called senselier) and a sommelier (wine expert). Together, they prepared a feast which combined food, aroma and wine into one incredible whole. The food was very unusual, the smells and consistencies surprising – the menu included things like cladonia, a sort of moss which gives evergreen woodlands their aroma, baked in a meringue cake. It was accompanied by the organic and incredibly enticing aroma of oud. I ate the meringue, even though I am not a fan, along with other dishes, because I wanted to see what would happen, how my taste buds would react, how my senses would respond. Five dishes in, I was absolutely excited, euphoric even, not because I was eating my favorite food but because my receptiveness, my sensory arousal, had reached its zenith.

In expanding receptiveness we can achieve great things, engaging in experiences without prior judgements being made, thereby openly enjoying them whole. That's why I advise everyone to broaden their fields of experience, even if we don't want to eat exotic foods or smell certain aromas.

I've no idea what I would have to do to learn such non-judgemental responses.

Let me suggest a simple exercise. Your partner prepares for you small portions of a range of diverse foods. We are trying to include all six flavour groups (sweet, salty, bitter, sour, spicy and umami – the taste of mushrooms or meat), as well as a range of consistencies. We have to add to this mix things you may not like or may not have tried before. Then your eyes are covered up and slowly, without using cutlery but through smelling, touching and tasting you try to experience the process of eating. You don't look for the names of dishes which are set before you, because it's not a blind taste test. Instead, you focus on the sensations which the food delivers to you without asking whether it tastes good or awful, experiencing it as if you were an alien from outer space sampling food on planet

Earth for the first time. Try it – I promise you will be pleasantly surprised.

Food and sex do of course have a lot in common.

We can be seduced by food, for it serves as a metaphor for sexuality, being – like sex – sensory, nourishing. Sex and food can compliment each other. There is a reason why one of the methods for enhancing our sex lives is being fed by your lover. This is very sensual and arousing at the same time, and of course it helps create intimacy. Food and sex meet our most profound biological and psychological needs, for we aren't just talking about surviving and breathing, but also gaining maximum pleasure from what we experience.

If you consider our expectations when it comes to erotica, then it is closely connected with food. Let's take the movie “9½ weeks” for example, where food and being fed become the way of expression of sexual obsession. When we want to present parts of the human body and don't want to be literal, we use names of fruits or vegetables instead. If we want to say to someone that we desire them very much, we often say we want to “eat them”.

The Second Meeting – The Body

A connection with the body creates a sense of inner unity within. A state in which you feel in synch with all your emotions, intuitions, senses and thoughts and they are all equally important. Critical forms of thinking do not block the sense of delight or joy, and at the same time you operate in the world which requires logic and common sense. Your senses, intellectual abilities and emotions allow us to manage situations both pleasant and difficult.

Imagine that you have been told off by your boss at the office and you know that to some point he might be right, but at the same time you feel mistreated and judged unfairly. In this situation your emotions – anger, fear, sadness – inform you about internal events of yours. That your boundaries have been crossed, that you worry about this job and feel insecure about your future. Your mind, on the other hand, informs you about reality, thanks to that you might decide how to react appropriately. Your intuition would help you with some unexpected insight, which could be an easy solution for the problem. Together they work hand to hand but if you ignore one of them you eventually will find yourself in trouble.

Being connected with the body differs from being obsessed with it. The first one is about love while second is about fear and control. If you think about the body in terms of oppression, eg. you want to force it to become completely different – “I will lose weight... put on weight... increase the size of this... decrease the size of that...” – you make your acceptance of yourself conditional. Your body deserves respect and understanding, because it is you, not because it could become a „better” sort of you.

Our obsession with controlling the body, with seeing it as a problem, comes from the insecurities we feel regarding status and quality. Connection with the body restores inner-confidence and inner-compassion and happens when we accept who we are, with all feeling – from fear to delight – all states of the body – from vulnerability to exhaustion. That is what this chapter is all about.

EXERCISE 1. – Body in a mirror

This exercise can be performed in two different ways. At the first you do it all alone, staying in close contact with your body, emotions and vulnerabilities. In the second version you are accompanied by your intimate partner or best friend, sibling etc. Needless to say that you need to decide what works best for you.

Version 1

If perform this exercise alone. You will require a large mirror which is big enough to show your whole body in one go. Spend a little while preparing for the exercise and calming down.

Strip naked and stand in front of the mirror. Look carefully at your own reflection.

Breathe deeply and speak to yourself aloud, addressing words of love and appreciation to all parts of your body. Talk to your breasts, stomach, arms, knees, back and bottom. Say what you feel and what you see but with acceptance not criticism. You want to move your focus in one defined direction, without skipping around – either from head to toes, or vice versa. You may say for example: “My breasts. When I was younger, I thought they were too small. Now, I see that they are just right and I am happy that they are healthy”.

Give yourself as much time as you need, in order to establish an emotional connection with each part of the body. If you get upset or emotional do not stop the tears or the exercise.

Breathe deeply all the time and pay attention to how you are feeling – be it sad, regretful, joyful, angry or foolish. When you finish, thank your body for all it has done for you so far.

Version 2

This is basically the first exercise again but your partner joins you also naked and talk to your body exactly as you did. The words should praise the parts where admiration is needed the most. Then you swap roles. Now you do the same for

them. After the exercise is finished, give yourselves time to breathe, as you are probably a bit emotional now, and then talk about how you felt.

EXERCISE 2. - The erotic map of the body

Kids do it in kindergartens, unfortunately as adults we forget about this simple yet powerful exercise. If you do this you may find an unexpected perspective looking at your body and the body of your partner.

Find yourselves some large sheets (eg. packing paper) and thick markers. Place one sheet of paper on the floor, taking care to have another insulating layer beneath it. One person lies on the paper, while the other draws the outline of the body using a thick marker. Do so both for the front and back, so that you end up with two drawn silhouettes. The person who has been sketched out makes marks with three different colors, showing: the parts which bring the most pleasure; their personal erogenous zones; and finally places which have shown potential to be fun but need more exploring.

This exercise is about recognizing and communicating the body's own needs. While drawing, the person should also explain each mark in as much detail as possible, so that the partner has a chance to learn.

Then you swap roles and repeat. At the end, take time to discuss your observations and conclusions. If in doing this you learn something surprising or you have the opportunity to talk about your emotional needs, do it gently and with compassion, using suggestions from chapter three (Nonviolent Communication). Also remember not to judge as there is no rulebook for how and where people can find pleasure. Each body is unique and it has its own sexual potential. When you have the map ready, you can play with it as you name or number specific sections and then using this code in your sex talks, eg „I wish I was climbing on K2.”

EXERCISE 3. - A everyday body

Most of our days are the same. We do routine things. We even react to the world in well known patterns. We regularly fail to eat properly, sleep enough, to take good care of ourselves. None of that serves our health or our wellbeing.

This exercise is similar to the one suggested in „The first meeting – the time” but here we want to do one good thing for our body – everyday. The reward we choose should be not only pleasant, but also good for the body; avoid things like alcohol, sugar, cigarettes, shopping etc. Instead of it seek at least one activity which gets your body going. If every day, after work, you drink wine at home to get chilled down, every other day choose a stroll and keep it as a routine.

This could be movement – a walk, a cycle ride, fitness, dance; it could be a mindfulness meditation or other forms of the practice; it could even be a massage or a hot bath. One of the simplest rewards you can reach for is a well prepared meal, home cooked, healthy, something both filling and nourishing, the Bic Mac and Coke does not count. This exercise is not about spending time and money on beauty procedures. The point is to learn new ways to respect and prize your body. The exercise should teach you to provide attention to and appreciation for your body in exchange for the work it does on your behalf.

EXERCISE 4. – The action and the stillness

Movement is as natural and necessary to our bodies as drinking and breathing. Without it there is no point dreaming of wellbeing or sexual peaks. You need to find the right sort of activities which will not bore you quickly or become the start of obsessive competition. Appropriate healthy movement not only enhances your constitution and condition, it also becomes a source of pleasure and a quality time which you give to yourself. Not all of us have to end up competing in the Iron Man endurance contest, but to climb five floors without getting breathless is something we can all aspire to.

At the same time, as you seek the most appropriate form of activity for you, begin looking for ways of relaxing the body. It doesn't get any real rest lying down in front of the tv set. Once again it needs to be physical, that's why any form of body work is such a benefit.

You may begin with a need to heal your aches and pains, others will look for ways to relax and unwind, yet others will be looking for emotive experiences. There are many techniques you can make use of – fascia therapy and massage, gentle bioenergetics, reflexology, the Feldenkrais method, Lowen bioenergetics, Ma-uri massage, Lomilomi massage and many others. Find that which nurtures you and helps you feel better within your body. Experiment, change techniques and masseurs to help have new experiences.

EXERCISE 5. – The symphony of senses

I encourage you to lose yourself in the symphony of senses. Multi sensory work means a mixing of sensory experiences. We make use of it when we smell wines before tasting them or touching the soft skin of a tomato with our noses in order to smell its fragrance. When Marcel Proust recalled his long lost childhood, he experienced olfactory sensations brought on by the taste of magdalene cakes. It is because every time we smell something connected with an old, powerful experience window opens up in our memory.

Smell and taste are the most easily accessed combinations. These two always combine to improve how we experience the food, the wine etc. This allows us to reach new dimensions in enjoying the simplest things we encounter.

If you have done the exercise from „The first meeting – don't see, don't judge” – you already know how many valuable experiences you are missing out on, using nothing but your eyes. A good example is the situation in which you have your eyes closed and are listening to music which moves you emotionally. The experience of touch in such a situation is much more intense.

Everyone has their own map of sensory modality – this means that the way in which you respond to the world is characteristic to you alone. Most often it is the eyesight which dominates the other modalities delivers the greatest amount of specific information and yet, it is not working in a vacuum. The remaining senses also work alongside each other, in the background even though we are not fully conscious of their work, we notice the results. And so, it is worth looking for your own personal paths and the most engaging combinations. The great amount of inspiration for development of the sensory apparatus is given to children in pre-school scenarios. Adults must discover by themselves how to improve such competencies. If you have children, play with them using objects which help develop the senses – giving off sounds, possessing different textures, changing shapes. If your children are a little bigger, you can take them to museums to see interactive exhibitions, so as to engage their senses on a different level. A visit to a restaurant which serves food in complete darkness is another great exercise in developing your own multi-sensory capacities.

Below, you will find a few ideas to change how you use your senses:

- Pinch your nose while eating, so you can experience what food tastes like without the sense of smell.
- Eat with your fingers while blindfolded.
- Smell everything you can; seek out unusual aromas and check how things and places which you have never focused on before, smell to you – the bus, the supermarket, etc.
- Try to recall olfactory memories – e.g., how did your family home smell during the summer, or winter?
- Seek out for new aromas which you may like, but also which you dislike, which seduce and arouse you.
- Always smell food before eating it. If you can, try to touch it.
- Discover new places, cities, landscapes, interiors not only with the eyes but also with touch and smell.
- Notice the changes taking place around you – temperature, light, dampness, the movement of air.
- Every so often, perform an exercise which involves closing your eyes and recounting in your mind that which you just saw a moment ago. Open your eyes, check how accurate you were at observing.
- As often as you can, touch objects around you – very, very slowly, checking out their texture.
- Pick up something you see everyday, touch it and explore it. Try to see things unusual way.

EXERCISE 6. – Rolling water

This exercise is used in many techniques of massage and therapy, and has many names. It utilizes the fact that our bodies are mostly composed of water and can easily be set in a soothingly rocking vibration. This vibration works to heal, soothe and relax bringing us to the state of bliss. It is also a great tool to train your receptiveness, to feel the deep connection with the body. “Rolling water” could also be a part of a personal erotic ritual but sensation itself does not have

explicit sexual connotation.

If you are doing “Rolling water” as a couple, the person who will be massaged lies back on a comfortable, not too soft surface and focuses on themselves. They can have their eyes closed. They also try not to fall asleep during this exercise, but instead remain aware. The giver begins by gently swaying the receiving person's head. Sitting behind them, they place their hands beneath the back of the skull, fingers interlaced, and slowly sway the head from side to side. This cannot involve strong or sudden movements. We want to achieve maximum fluidity of motion and allow the receiver to enter a state of tranquility. This part should last around three to four minutes. When the breathing becomes deeper, you can tell they have become more relaxed.

Then, you sit to their side and begin to massage the other person's hand. Delicately slide it away from the body and place your hands on the arm and then roll your hands with a motion similar to that used when kids make plasticine snakes – long, gentle moves back and forth. You can lift the arm and perform movement all around. In massage, you want to stimulate the body's natural water and so imagine you are moving a vessel full of liquid, constantly rocking it but never spilling it.

You can first massage one side of the body – the left hand, left leg or first both hands and then the legs. Massaging the legs will of course require stronger strokes. When you move to the torso, you need to modify your movements. Place both hands on the rib cage or sternum (breastbone) and sway them gently, as if you wanted to wobble a giant mound of jelly. This movement should also be fluid, though decisive, so that our imaginary jelly isn't torn up but instead swayed with singular rhythm. You do the same with the belly, the back and the buttocks. If the receiving person expresses a sense of discomfort at any point, you change the motion, making it more delicate and if that doesn't help, you change it for a less critical section of the body. The swaying can also be applied to the joints and feet, but it is essential to then apply some form of support – a grip to steady the massaged joint. The movements cannot strain the joints or bend them in any way.

Exercise 7 – The connected vessels

The main aim of this exercise is amusement but also it helps to improve receptiveness, with which you profit more from erotic stimulation. Choose two

areas of your partner's body – one which is already responsive to touch, produces sensual or sexual sensations, and a second, which is still relatively unresponsive. You can choose, for example, the inside of the thighs – a very sensitive point – along with calves and knees, which are often overlooked during foreplay. These can also include the breasts and forearms, the choice is yours, as long as they are reasonably close to each other.

For at least a quarter of an hour, using careful touch, stimulate both the easily aroused and the more reluctant sections. If you stroke and massage with your open hand the inside of the thighs, you do the same thing to the calves. Do it slowly, in both places in the same way. If you change the style and strength of your touch, or use some kind of accessory (such as feathers), do the same for both regions. The person experiencing the caress has to focus on breathing and not to talk, this way they can totally focus on receiving.

The question of whether the eyes remain open or closed is up to you. I think that when the eyes remain open we engage with the exercise a lot more intensively, but there may come the need to focus on one's inner self and then closing the eyes helps. You can reserve a few minutes to discuss that which happened during the exercise, but always only once it is done. Keep repeating the “The connected vessels” exercise at regular intervals – in order to sustain the heightened receptiveness.

Exercise 8 - Enhance and expand

Choose one area of your partner's body which is already responsive. If your attention is wondering towards intimate parts, during the exercise avoid the penis and the clitoris, because contact with them will not increase receptiveness, but lead to orgasm. In actual fact, the best choice at first are the breasts and the buttocks, because they are often overlooked.

If you chose the breasts, touch and arouse them, starting with circular motions of an even intensity. You can first work on one breast, and then the other, but at some point do remember to work on them simultaneously. Work the circles from the centres of the breasts to the outside, in the direction of the armpits, the breastbone and the belly. After a while, you can alter the sort of touch, but keep on massaging both breasts in the same way and the same tempo. Try to touch ever greater sections around the breasts, but do not make sudden movements, try to work very, very slowly.

If you choose the buttocks as the sphere of increasing receptiveness, work in the same fashion. You can also modify the style of touching, massage first one, then the other buttock, but always have time for simultaneous caressing. Expand your area of activity to the top and the bottom of the buttocks, hips and area around the base of the spine. Do not forget to pay attention to the very sensitive area between the buttocks. The same as in “Connected vessels”, the person who is receiving doesn't talk, only immerses themselves in their own experience.

If there is a need to talk about emotions and sensations, do it after the exercise is over. In “Expanding and developing” we are trying to make a larger portion of the body react to arousal inputs the same as our well known, main erogenous zones. This is why those exercise should be regularly repeated.