

*Extatica*  <sup>®</sup>  
THE WAY  
TO AN  
EROTIC, ECSTATIC LOVE LIFE

On the VoiceAmerica 7<sup>th</sup> Wave Network

**Episode #18**

**Show Title:** Bringing Ecstasy, Intimacy, and Peace into Your Love Life

**Show Date:** March 5, 2014

**Guest(s):** Dr. Jalaja Bonheim

## Extatica: The Way to an Erotic, Ecstatic Love Life

2014

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### Show Description:

The word “ecstatic” is intimately connected to our topic for this show, and one of three critical realms of life we weave together: Ecstasy, Intimacy and Peace.

With Jalaja Bonheim’s vast knowledge of these subjects, we explore questions like:

- What *is* ecstasy?
- What is intimacy and how does it relate to ecstasy?
- Why shame is the arch-enemy of ecstasy (and how this relates to the story of Adam and Eve)
- Why healing our relationship to desire is a key to the survival of our species and the healing of our planet.

The goal is to explore how we can bring both ecstasy and peace into our lives and intimate relationships, including our sex lives, and in this way make a small contribution to the healing of ourselves, our communities, and all of humanity.

Websites: <http://www.instituteforcirclework.org/>

<http://www.evolvingtowardpeace.com>

### Guest Bio:

You may know Jalaja Bonheim, Ph.D., as the author the 1997 underground classic, *Aphrodite’s Daughters*. Based on the stories of ordinary American women, beautifully written, and irresistibly engaging, it shows the immensely important role sexuality plays in shaping our spiritual journey.

She has also published four other books, including *The Hunger for Ecstasy*, and her latest, *Evolving Toward Peace: Awakening the Global Heart*, which is being heralded as “exciting, compelling and groundbreaking.”

Jalaja Bonheim, Ph.D., is the founder and director of the Institute for Circlework and one of the foremost experts in the use of circle gatherings for healing, peacemaking and women’s empowerment. She has gained international recognition for her groundbreaking work with Jewish and Palestinian women in the Middle East.

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*Welcome to Extatica: The Way to an Erotic, Ecstatic Love Life. Your host is Ellen Eatough, the Soulful Sex Coach. Our program will take you beyond the sex you have been experiencing and open up a whole new world of intimacy. You've got a lot to learn today, so let's get started. Here is Ellen Eatough.*

**Ellen Eatough:** Are you ready for an ecstatic love life? I am.

Now, this is going to be a very special show with someone I'm very excited to have as my guest, Dr. Jalaja Bonheim. The word "ecstatic" as in Extatica, the word ecstatic is intimately connected to our topic for today's show and one of three critical realms of life that I'd like to bring together today and those are ecstasy, intimacy, and peace. I want to explore how we can bring both ecstasy and peace into our lives and intimate relationships including our sex lives, and in this way make some small contribution to the healing of ourselves, our community, and all of humanity.

Now, I know that's a tall order but I believe Dr. Jalaja Bonheim is up to the task. She's really an extraordinary woman who spent her life integrating ecstasy, intimacy, and peace and offering her wisdom to her books, articles, lectures, and her circle workshops all over the world. I consider Jalaja really one of the wisest, most embodied spiritual leaders on the planet. She's been an inspiration to me since I first read one of her earlier wonderful books called Aphrodite's Daughters. This was based on the sexual stories of ordinary American women, and it shows the immensely important role of sexuality plays in shaping our spiritual journey.

She has several terrific books, and I think the next one was The Hunger for Ecstasy: Fulfilling the Soul's Need for Passion and Intimacy which, of course, was a big one for me. And in fact, before that book was published, she wrote an article by that title and she very generously gave me permission to post that article, The Hunger for Ecstasy, on my initial Extatica website which I left in the front page for years because I just felt it was so perfectly interfacing with what I do.

Now, in her earlier years, Jalaja learned Indian temple dance in South India, and there she connected with an ancient lineage of priestesses who model the integration of spirituality and sexuality. And I know that this has provided sort of a foundation and a thread through all of her work. She later offered workshops on movement as a spiritual practice, co-creating a sanctuary of space where women would slow down and listen deeply to their hearts and bodies.

Eventually, this evolved into her method called Circlework, and International Circle Work Leadership Training. Jalaja Bonheim, Ph.D., is now the Founder and Director of the Institute for Circlework and one of the foremost experts in the use of circle gathering for healing, peacemaking, and women's empowerment. She's gained an

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international reputation for her groundbreaking work with Jewish and Palestinian women in the Middle East. She is the author of five books and her latest is *Evolving Toward Peace: Awakening the Global Heart*. It's being heralded as exciting, compelling, and groundbreaking.

And just to give you an idea of how highly she's revered by global thought leaders, she was interviewed by Dr. Deepak Chopra rather than the other way around.

So welcome, Dr. Jalaja Bonheim.

**Jalaja Bonheim:** Thank you so much. What a great introduction.

**EE:** Well, it comes from the heart.

So let's start by exploring these terms: ecstasy, intimacy, and peace. And back to Deepak Chopra in describing one of your books, he says, "In a world that is starving for ecstasy, *The Hunger for Ecstasy* offers powerful healing medicine, a passionate and wise invitation to open our lives and our souls to ecstasy, recognizing it for what it really is -- the experience of our divinity." And I just love that because I know that's what your book is really about.

So for our listeners, could you define ecstasy and why we hunger for it?

**JB:** Well, you know, I think that we have to understand the ecstasy is not -- we sometimes think of it as something exceptional and abnormal, and I think we have to understand that it is so integral to who we are. It's something children experience, animals experience. It's absolutely natural. And so when we do not experience ecstasy, we are not healthy. We cannot be healthy without ecstasy.

So I think we need to reclaim it as something that belongs to all of us, that it's not just this sort of exceptional thing that very rare special people get to experience. It's essential for all of us. I think in this culture we don't acknowledge that, and so we get a lot of addictions where people, you know, "Oh, something is missing. I'm not sure what it is. Let me go shopping," or "Let me have a drink" because we don't even know exactly what it is that is missing, but it is that ecstasy.

To me, ecstasy, it feels wonderful and it is sourced in spirit. So it is that experience of direct communion with the source. You don't need to talk about religion or anything like that, but there is just a tremendous joy that comes from that experience of being connected with the universe, being connected with nature, and I believe we all need that very much.

**EE:** Yeah. We need it on a regular basis.

**JB:** We do, we do.

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**EE:** So how would you distinguish ecstasy from what people normally think of as happiness?

**JB:** Well, happiness, I mean happiness is a wonderful thing and we all need that too, but it is more on the emotional level, the way I understand it. Ecstasy, now the very word means "to step out of." So in that state of ecstasy, it's like you're stepping out of your ego self. You're stepping into the realm of the Divine in a sense. So whereas happiness is something that you can experience in a very mundane way which is a beautiful thing, but ecstasy really takes us out of the mundane. It connects us with something that is truly outside of our ordinary ego realm.

And that's why it's so healing and so necessary. When you read about the rituals of indigenous peoples, it's so clear that they understood that people need ecstasy and, as you say, they need it on a regular basis. So these rituals would provide opportunities to the people to step out of their everyday self and connect with something greater.

**EE:** And they would do this through dance and chanting and so forth?

**JB:** Yeah. Many different tools: dance, chanting, plants, medicines -- all kinds of things, but the understanding was that this was something that was essential to the health of the community and that if the community did not have this, the community could not be healthy.

**EE:** So when you talk about the hunger for ecstasy or anything else, that makes me think of desire. So how do you see the role of desire relative to ecstasy or a spiritual path?

**JB:** Well, desire has been kind of maligned especially in spiritual circles as this negative thing. But as I see it, desire is this sacred force and it pulls us. It's letting us know that there is something here that is important to us, something we need and want. So it's almost like the desire is this magnetic force that is drawing us towards ecstasy. It's letting us know, here, go in that direction. Now, of course, I speak of a hierarchy of desires because maybe you won a Mercedes-Benz. That's one level of desire.

**EE:** Or another drink if you're an alcoholic, yeah.

**JB:** Yeah, another drink, yeah, yeah. So these are all substitutes. But when you really go to the root of it, what do I really want? And I see this in my circles over and over again that when people really stood with that question "What do I really want?" there is passion, there is intimacy, there is ecstasy. That is what we all really want.

**EE:** Yeah. You say that healing our relationship to desire is a key to the survival of our species and the healing of our planet. Can you speak to that a little bit?

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**JB:** Yes. It's interesting because I just wrote this new book about peace and some people said to me, "Why have you shifted from writing about sexuality and spirituality and ecstasy to writing about peace?" And I say I don't feel like I have shifted at all. I feel like this is a different facet of the same issue. Personally, I feel that this function between men and women and are warped relationship to sexuality and desire really lies at the root of the global dysfunction.

It's very clear when you look at cultures that are very violent and have a lot of warfare. These are, without exception, cultures where the feminine is denigrated and when relationships between men and women are oppressive and not healthy. So to my mind, it is this healing of our relationships, and the healing of our own relationship to our own sexuality is a really important contribution to peace. They are really inseparable as I see it.

**EE:** Touché, touché. I certainly agree with that. So there's the healing of the sexuality. So let's kind of bring this -- because you make a connection between ecstasy and peace, but let's dive a little deeper. So healing our relationship to our sexuality you say is intimately related to peace. How do you see it as related to a spiritual path and kind of pulling all of those together?

**JB:** Well, sexuality is one of the most potent ways in which we connect to nature. It's a basic essential force of nature that runs through us. And we have become very disconnected from nature, and I think the western tradition especially has taught us to not really trust nature.

So as we begin to heal our own relationship to sexuality, we also begin to make peace with nature. So instead of viewing the natural world as something to be conquered and controlled and exploited, we begin to develop this sense of reverence, for this incredible mystery that we experience in our own bodies, in our relationship, and all around us.

So I feel that as we begin to heal our own sexuality both with ourselves and with our partners, we really are making a contribution so that our species which is so fallen out of alignment with the natural world can come back into alignment and really honor those forces as the sacred essential forces that they are in our lives.

**EE:** And this also brings in the whole feminine archetype you mentioned, our western culture proclivity toward conquering nature. But this is really bringing in the feminine or yin approach and you talk about the priestess archetype, bringing in the feminine approach to healing. Of course, sexuality is primarily our feminine side, that deeper connection. You want to speak to that feminine priestess a little?

**JB:** I'd love to. It's one of my favorite things to talk about really. When I went to India, I really didn't know anything about this tradition of temple priestesses. And in India, it has become very covered up. So I really had to dig down to begin to understand who were these women, who were these temple priestesses. And I

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learned that they were sexual priestesses and that in their sexuality they were thought to be embodiments of the goddess.

And so it was a tremendous honor to make love to a temple priestess because in that you were reenacting the beginning of creation. So you were reenacting that union of feminine and masculine out of which they believe the entire cosmos came. When I came to this country, I began to wonder, what happened to that for us? And that's when I started interviewing women and asking them, "Have you experienced that priestess side of yourself? And if so, where and when?"

I began to realize that we do experience it. We don't really have any cultural context for honoring it, but in my circles I hear so many stories from women about these experiences that they have had in which they really did step into the role of the sexual priestess.

**EE:** And this is sort of like the stories that you also conveyed in your book, Aphrodite's Daughters, right?

**JB:** Yes. Some of them are definitely those stories, yup.

**EE:** All right. We're going to come back to more of this, but it's time for us to take a short break. And before we do, I'd like to mention a couple of things. I have a gift for my listeners. It's my hour-long audio and e-book called Beyond Orgasm: How to Have a More Deeply Connected Sexual Experience. You can find it at [extatica.com](http://extatica.com) on the homepage, or you can take the easy route and type in [beyondorgasm.com](http://beyondorgasm.com) to get to the same place.

The replays of this show and all the Extatica radio shows are available streaming online or as MP3 downloads to take with you, and those are also at [extatica.com/show](http://extatica.com/show). The downloadable transcripts of the shows are also available there at [extatica.com/show](http://extatica.com/show).

This is Ellen Eatough with Dr. Jalaja Bonheim. Stay tuned for more on Bringing Ecstasy, Intimacy, and Peace into Your Love Life.

[ Commercial Break ]

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**EE:** Welcome back. This is Ellen Eatough on Extatica with Dr. Jalaja Bonheim, author of The Hunger for Ecstasy and Evolving Toward Peace: Awakening the Global Heart.

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Before we get back to this subject of Bringing Ecstasy, Intimacy, and Peace into Your Love Life, I want to mention something that you may have heard during the break. That's my Love Unbound: Music for Love Making infused with Auditory Pheromones. You may be interested to know that customers who play this music in the background while making love consistently report enhanced libido and arousal rates, different intimacy, easier orgasms and often multiple orgasms for women for the first time, release of cultural or religious inhibitions for greater spontaneity, which is great because it's some of this stuff we're getting into with Jalaja about the history and the inhibitions. People also experience easier communication about sexual needs and desires and a sense of spiritual union as frequently reported.

So to learn more about that, just go to [getabettersexlife.com](http://getabettersexlife.com).

Okay. So during the break, Jalaja and I were speaking about how we want to address the question of how do we bring men into this whole realm because it's so easy for women to get into this -- well, it's not easy, but a lot of women kind of take the leap into the realm of the sexual priestess, and we want to be sure that we bring men along the way. So what would you like to say about that, Jalaja?

**JB:** Well, before we were talking about this feminine and I always emphasize when we speak about the feminine, we're speaking about the way our culture defines it. So we have this association of the feminine with softness, with receptivity, all these different associations. And because we're the children of an essentially patriarchal culture, men learn that they are not supposed to be that way. Everything we have associated with the feminine is unmanly. And of course, I see that a lot when I go to the Middle East but I also see it in men here.

So I think it's very important for men to understand that these qualities of softness, of yielding, of sensitivity, they are actually not feminine at all. They are human. Men have suffered so much by being shamed for exhibiting those qualities and being told from a young age, "You're not supposed to do that. You're a boy. You're a man." When you look at the tantric traditions, you see that the role models of men there are very different from our ideals of what is manly and what is strong.

**EE:** And for our listeners, can you describe that what those role models looked like in those times?

**JB:** Yeah, yeah. I mean, for example, when you go to India and you see the statues of the gods, very sensual but they are also very tender, almost like curvy. They have a lot of qualities that we associate with the feminine. In my new book, I speak about heart shame because just as we have associated -- we call the earth feminine and the sun masculine, all these things. We also have learned that the mind is masculine and the heart is feminine. So men are not supposed to be so heart-centered. They are not supposed to be so tender-hearted.

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So a tremendous amount of shame has been heaped on all of us but I think more on men. And so I think anything we can do to support men in shedding that heart shame, which often holds them back from really expressing their love, their feelings, their emotions, is a really important step towards healing and to help them understand when we speak of the feminine, that can easily be misunderstood as something that doesn't concern men because it's feminine. No, it does. It's actually human.

**EE:** I'm glad you brought this up because, first of all, we have a lot of heritage from the Greeks and so forth about the division of this masculine and feminine, the way you described. But the word "heart" also, the root word for courage is "core" which means heart. We think of courage often as like something that a warrior has in battle. So that can be a very masculine trait. It's a very human trait also. It crosses gender distinctions. So you're right. It's very sad to hear that the idea of heart has shame around it for men.

**JB:** And when you listen to the media, that is sort of the mainstream media. You hear a lot of cynicism, a lot of putting down of the heart. And once you sort of get attuned to it, you recognize it for what it is. You realize that this is heart shame in action. This is people who feel ashamed of their own heart fullness sensitivity trying to impose that same shame on others.

And so I think it is very important that men find support both among other men and from women. By the way, it really does take courage to bare our hearts. It takes perhaps more courage than going into battle.

**EE:** Oh, absolutely, because that's when we're really the most vulnerable is baring our hearts.

**JB:** So I think if we can support men and children, boys and really teach them that this is a beautiful thing, that this is a gift, and that this is really essential for a good relationship.

**EE:** Yeah, because my view, my experience in talking to so many women, and I imagine yours too, is that women want a man who has masculine qualities and strength but that also has the capacity for intimacy and deep communication and tenderness and awareness of other's needs and that whole heart connection. It's so important.

**JB:** Yes. And also I talked before about how ecstasy is the stepping out of our ego. So in ecstasy, a lot of times there is the sense of "Oh, I'm losing control." Of course, men have been taught that's the worst thing. You're never supposed to lose control. And yet if you want to go into ecstatic sexuality, you have to be willing to let go of control.

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**EE:** Very true. And then speaking of shame and ecstasy, you talked about -- well, of course, there's so much shame in the realm of sexuality, but you described shame as the archenemy of ecstasy. Can you explain that?

**JB:** Yeah. That whole story in the Bible with the stick leaf and all that, like for years I puzzled those. What's going on here? They eat this apple and then suddenly they're covering their genitals with stick leaf. How is this connected? And then, finally, I understood.

**EE:** Something about the shape of that serpent.

**JB:** Yeah, that serpent is the serpentine life force that runs through our body, and it roots --

**EE:** Yeah, Kundalini energy, right?

**JB:** Yeah. And it's root in our body. It's in the sexual center. And so here are Adam and Eve and they have listened to the serpent rather than to this new patriarchal Father God who says the serpent is evil. And so here --

**EE:** Wow, I never put this together. Thank you. This is great.

**JB:** Yeah, yeah. So that is why I call it the burst of shame. This is where they take in this message that this serpentine life force that lives in their genitals is somehow evil and shameful. It has caused us so much damage, so much harm. And I think we're just beginning to unravel that and free ourselves, liberate ourselves from that.

**EE:** Wow. Thank you for putting those pieces of that story together for me. I really appreciate that. I mean it seems obvious, but it wasn't until you said it that way. I mean the Bible I think talks about shame and so forth. But that's so clear now. So, let's talk about peace. I have a number of questions, but first how would you define peace especially as it relates to intimate relationships?

**JB:** That's a big question. What I would first say is it's not the absence of conflict. People sometimes think it means -- it does not mean the absence of conflict. To me, when we are living in peace, there is the sense of belonging to a larger whole, whether that larger hole is our relationship or our community or our planet; and that we are trying to live in a way that benefits the entire community, the greater community as opposed to only ourselves.

So you see it a lot when countries become isolated, and it's all just about this country is the best and the greatest and it's going to wage war on all the others as opposed to really looking at the planet as we are more and more as a great planetary community. So then we can ask ourselves, what action would benefit the greater community? And of course, you can take it right down to your relationships

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that that thinking that I think successful couples do. How are my actions going to affect my partner? How are they going to affect my relationship?

And so that leads to peace, that awareness that we are part of something larger and we are looking out for the happiness and wellbeing of that larger entity, not just ourselves.

**EE:** And then, of course, as Gandhi said, "Be the change you want to see in the world." So that's a critical place to start. So what connections do you make between ecstasy and peace? I want to kind of bring this around then.

**JB:** Well, maybe I can talk a little bit about what I see in the women's circles that I lead because ecstasy to me is -- it can be something solitary but certainly in the path of the priestess, it was something that was cultivated in relationship and in community, not on your own. So this is a big piece of what we do in the circle. There is this love energy that we create in our circles that get stronger and stronger until we really do feel this ecstasy rising through us.

And it is interesting that when we go into that place, from that place we are able, not just we -- first of all, we fall in love with each other, and I see this happening with the Jewish and the Arab women but also just in this country with women who are coming as total strangers and a day later they are in love with each other.

So it is from that place I believe that we are able to work through our conflict and to find solutions to all our problems. Personally, I believe that's the case not just on the personal level but also on the larger level. All the problems that we face in the world today, I believe that if we could connect on that heart level in that place where we move into joy and to love and to ecstasy, from that place we can see that there are solutions. And from that place also we have the willingness to compromise, to let go of certain things, to make sacrifices, to make those solutions work. And I have seen this over and over again.

It's so sad in our culture we consider love and ecstasy, we consider them sort of -- I want to say utopian or something that's nice in your personal private realm but not really important on a more public way. And I feel the absolute opposite is true; that until we come together in this love space, we're stuck. We cannot resolve our problems. And it's true whether you're talking about a couple or a community or the planet.

**EE:** So do you ever bring men into your circles?

**JB:** I do sometimes do circles that are for men and women, and more and more men are asking for it.

**EE:** I would think so.

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**JB:** Yeah. The women are coming home and they're just glowing. And the guys are saying, "Huh, I want some of that."

**EE:** "I want what she's got," yeah.

**JB:** Yeah. "I want what she's got." I think 20 years ago when I started leading circles, it was a little early and sometimes I did circles with men and there would be 20 women and two men. But now I think it's just that more and more men are really wanting this and open to it and it's beautiful.

**JB:** Wow, that's great. So we're going to take our last short break. When we come back, I want to get into this subject of addiction because you've talked about how addiction is one of the most common symptoms of ecstasy deprivation. I think it gets in the way of peace oftentimes too.

So this is Ellen Eatough on Extatica with Dr. Jalaja Bonheim. And just to remind you, you can get replays of this program and all Extatica radio show episodes, both streaming online or downloads, plus the transcripts of the shows at [extatica.com/show](http://extatica.com/show). We'll be right back.

[ Commercial Break ]

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**EE:** Welcome back. This is Ellen Eatough on Extatica with Dr. Jalaja Bonheim.

We're exploring how to bring more ecstasy, intimacy, and peace into your love life. By the way, and we'll get to this at the end, but I want to tell you right now that Jalaja's website is [jalajabonheim.com](http://jalajabonheim.com). We'll post that on the Extatica website show page so you can also --

**JB:** Ellen, I'd also add, they can also get to the same place just by putting in [evolvingtowardpeace.com](http://evolvingtowardpeace.com).

**EE:** That's easier to spell, [evolvingtowardpeace.com](http://evolvingtowardpeace.com), and then we'll revisit it at the end of the show. Okay, great.

So I know that you've said that addiction is one of the most common symptoms of ecstasy deprivation. And it's easy to think of addictions as things like alcohol, you mentioned shopping or overeating, those kinds of things. But I think a lot of people are addicted to drama and the adrenaline that is produced when they engage in drama or conflict, just the highs and lows, with the extremes, both the extreme joy and then the extreme negativity oftentimes. So how do we deal with that and in our

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relationships? How do we sort of step out of that mode? So how do you connect that with ecstasy depravation?

**JB:** Yeah. I think you're absolutely right. And for me I grew up in Germany, and I often think about war too as a form of addiction because war takes men, women too, but primarily men, to these situations that -- I don't know if you can call them ecstatic, but they are in a sense because there is this confrontation with death and it's absolutely stepping out of your normal self.

**EE:** Many military people coming back say that that's when they felt most alive is being in the front line, when it was really life or death.

**JB:** Right, right. And so drama, of course, is a version of the same thing. I think that we won't shift that until we become conscious of the fact that we're not really satisfied. It's not really giving us what we want. It's like we repeat the cycle over and over and at some point we sit down and go, "Huh, I'm not really getting what I want here." Before then we're not really willing to face the addiction just like an alcoholic isn't willing to face the addiction initially.

I think that one of the benefits of being part of a circle, being part of a community of any kind that values ecstasy and that looks for inroads to ecstasy is that more and more we don't need those alternatives. We realize that there are other ways. But until we have those other ways, people in a sense are stuck. They are starving and they don't even know that they are starving. And so, of course, they reach for drama. They reach for whatever kind of addiction they are drawn to.

Of course, I believe that there are -- in my new book I write about these two kinds of addictions that I think affect us all. One of them is thought addiction. We are all addicted to thinking.

**EE:** Yeah, well, self included. So you want to speak to that a little more?

**JB:** Yeah. And in a sense there is that inner drama that is constantly being recreated through our thought process. And so to find that place of inner peace, which really is the access road to ecstasy, is very, very important.

**EE:** And you mean through meditation, for example?

**JB:** It could be meditation. For me, it's the circle. It takes me there so fast. So fast. It is so easy in that space, in that Mandala of the circle to settle down, to find that place of inner peace and inner centeredness. But there are, of course, many ways.

And then that second addiction, I think I touched on it before, is the addiction to control. We're all raised to believe that that's the mark of success is to be in control, and that too is an addiction. But it's an addiction that our society rewards us for and fosters. So when we begin to come to this place where there is the possibility of

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going into ecstasy, a lot of times you'll notice that something happens. Either we start thinking like crazy or we reach for whatever activity helps us stay in control as a way of defending against ecstasy because it scares us.

**EE:** Yeah. I think that's one of the great fears is being out of control.

**JB:** Being out of control.

**EE:** As if we really had control, which is ultimately a joke. We have this false sense of control that we try to maintain.

**JB:** It's an illusion, yeah. But there again, I think we need community to really support us and to say to us, "It's okay. Go there," and to acknowledge we all share the same addictions, the same fears. It's not like this is my problem. It's our problem. We've all been programmed to avoid ecstasy, and we've all been taught these various ways of doing it. So it's not really a personal issue. It's a collective issue. And I always tell people, if you can open to love, if you can open to ecstasy, understand that you are giving others permission to do the same. You are helping others do the same.

**EE:** So true. So true. Yeah. We forget that by being vulnerable and opening to this, as you say, ecstasy, willingness to be out of control, we are giving others sort of permission.

**JB:** Yeah.

**EE:** I want to kind of -- something that's been on my mind. I'm not quite sure how this fits into what you're saying, but back to -- kind of a one-on-one relationship although this has global implications, that violence in a relationship can go beyond physical violence and even emotional abuse because I think violence can include the guilt and shame and blame we inflict on the ones we love in an attempt to get what we want or to, again, feel in control. I think this is kind of a microcosm of what happens on a global scale.

So do you have anything to say about how to help people step out of that tendency? I mean it does seem to come out of an attempt to control, and the shame is like the -- it keeps us from experiencing ecstasy. How do we pull all this together?

**JB:** Yeah. Well, there's no cookie cutter model because I work with a lot of couples and it's different for each couple. But I talk in my book about what I call relational education, and relational education is that education that teaches us how to have fulfilling relationships. And to my mind, this is something every child should learn in school. It's more important than trigonometry or anything else they learn. If there's one thing we should teach children in school, it's how to resolve conflict, how to communicate without blame, without judgment because these things are not easy.

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And if we grow up with these patterns, most people can't step out of them without any help and it is not easy.

So I think that we have a huge job of relational education. And the first step, obviously, is to recognize how important it is. And it's teachable and it's learnable. And couples who are stuck in these old patterns can transform them. But, usually, they do need some help in doing that. They need some relational education.

**EE:** Right, because it's not part of our history really.

**JB:** No. And if we didn't have parents who knew how to do it, where would we have learnt it?

**EE:** Certainly, not on television.

**JB:** Certainly not, no.

**EE:** Or on YouTube. So as part of that education or a practice, you emphasized the need for discipline on the path of ecstasy, and discipline I presume is also needed on the path to peace. So why is this important? I like an analogy that you give about the potter spinning a vessel.

**JB:** Yeah. And I would say that by discipline, sometimes we have this negative connotation with -- that it's something rigid. But what I mean by discipline is that discipline is the way that we learn something. So if I want to learn to play the piano, then the discipline is the doing it over and over. And so as far as I'm concerned, learning to love is a tremendous discipline. We naturally, when everything is going the right way, it is easy to open our hearts, it's easy to love. But the discipline comes in when it's not so easy, when we somehow get triggered by something.

And so this is where this commitment to say, "I am on this path of love. I am on this path of ecstasy." And how do I stay on this path when things get difficult? That's where the discipline comes in. And that I think is something that we can only do in community.

**EE:** And can you just tie it in with that analogy of the potter's wheel because I just think that's a good visual example.

**JB:** Yeah. It's an image I use a lot in the circle because the circle is like a pot. When I use to watch these potters and if you want to make a really big pot, you need a lot of skill. That potter's wheel needs to be perfectly centered because if it's not perfectly centered, everything is just going to fly out.

So I think the same is true in our lives. If you think of our life as this vessel and we want this vessel to be expansive and we want this vessel to be generous and growing but for that to be happening, we really need to be anchored in our center.

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We really need some kind of practice that again and again brings us back to ourselves when we lose our center. And we all do; that's just life.

So this over and over returning to our center and dropping more deeply into it, that to me, that is the art of centering. And for me, when I learned Indian temple dance, Indian temple dance is very much in the belly, in the pelvis, and you spend your first year just learning to really drop down and be centered there. And so for me it was a great foundation. When I'm in the circle and all kinds of chaos is happening and people are erupting and having emotions to be in the midst of that and stay in your center is a great training.

**EE:** Oh, wow, yeah. I like what you said about that training to come from that center place of love.

So we have to wrap this up in a moment, but I wanted to give you a chance to just tell us a little about your work with the Israeli and Palestine women.

**JB:** Yeah. I love leading circles and eventually I started leading circles in the Middle East and also working with women from India, Afghanistan because I feel like we are building this global community, primarily a women's community, women who really see the need for love and peace. And so I love going over there working with these women who are so committed to growth and to peace. If there's one thing I love more than leading circles, it's teaching other women to lead their own circles.

So this is something for years I've been doing in the United States and Canada. If women are interested, they can go to my website and I would really -- if you are drawn to circles, learn to lead them. It's a beautiful thing. And I'm really excited because this year for the very first time, I'm going to be working with the Palestinian women, not just leading a circle but leading the circle we're training so that they now can lead their own circles in their own communities in their own language, which I think is very important. So I'm very excited about this.

**EE:** Oh, yeah. And these are women that are coming together in circles that -- I mean their countries, their cultures are warring each other and yet they are coming together in peace and ecstasy in your circle which is so exciting.

**JB:** Yeah. Well, you know, a lot of them are mothers. And so right there they all want a good life, good future for their children. They all want the same thing.

**EE:** Absolutely. So to learn more about this work and if you want to participate in her circles, of learning how to lead circles, the short version, the easiest route you said was [evolvingtowardpeace.com](http://evolvingtowardpeace.com). Is that correct?

**JB:** Right, right.

**EE:** [Evolvingtowardpeace.com](http://Evolvingtowardpeace.com).

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**JB:** They can also go to the organization. It's called the [instituteforcirclework.org](http://instituteforcirclework.org). That's another resource.

**EE:** Okay, the instituteforcirclework.org. Okay. Well, I just want you to know that if you didn't catch some of that and you want more, you can get the transcript at [extatica.com/show](http://extatica.com/show).

So just my heart is full. Thank you so much, Dr. Jalaja Bonheim, for being here. This has been a wonderful hour. I really appreciate it.

**JB:** Thank you, Ellen. It's been my pleasure.

**EE:** And thank you for listening to Extatica. This is Ellen Eatough in support of you having an erotic, ecstatic love life.

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