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THE WAY
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EROTIC, ECSTATIC LOVE LIFE

On the VoiceAmerica 7th Wave Network

Episode #19

Show Title: Women, Sex and Aging: The Best is Yet to Come

Show Date: March 12, 2014

Guest(s): Dr. Jalaja Bonheim

Extatica: The Way to an Erotic, Ecstatic Love Life

2014

Show Description:

Discover why and how your sex life can get better as you age, whether you're single or coupled, through a more expansive way of experiencing sex. Explore new dimensions of your sensual self and your sexual relationship with yourself and your partner, if you have one – realms of pleasure, intimacy, and ecstasy you may not have known existed. This can be a very exciting phase of life!

Many women find that, as they age, they are interested in a different expression of their sexuality, often less genitally focused and far more tuned into energy. Did you know older women have a greater capacity to experience the energetics of sex?

In this show, we'll share how to explore this realm, including:

Making love with God: What it means and why every woman should do it
How we can cultivate erotic energy without a partner, and why it's important to do so
Why women who have male partners may be underestimating them, and how to bring them on board to happily provide what you want and need
Heart orgasms
What men love about older women relative to sex
Becoming shameless
Websites:

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

<http://www.evolvingtowardpeace.com>

Guest Bio:

In her earlier years, Jalaja Bonheim, Ph.D., learned Indian temple dance in South India. There, she connected with an ancient lineage of priestesses who modeled the integration of spirituality and sexuality. Later, she offered workshops on movement as a spiritual practice, co-creating a sanctuary space where women would slow down and listen deeply to their hearts and bodies.

You may know my guest, Jalaja as the author the 1997 underground classic, *Aphrodite's Daughters*. Still in print, it's based on the sexual 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 authored several other books, including *The Hunger for Ecstasy*, and her latest, *Evolving Toward Peace: Awakening the Global Heart*. She's one of the foremost experts in the use of circle gatherings for healing, peacemaking and women's empowerment.

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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. Today the topic is Women, Sex And Aging: The Best is Yet to Come. My guest and I are here to tell you this is absolutely true.

I'm going to do something I've never done on this show which is to have a guest on two weeks in a row. It's Jalaja Bonheim. Now last week we discussed bringing ecstasy, intimacy and peace into your love life. After the show she mentioned that she recently turned 60 and would love to have the opportunity sometime to explore the topic of women, sex and aging because women are told they will be less sexual as they age and it doesn't have to be that way. Keeping our sensuality and our eroticism in our lives is really important.

Since I'm older than she is and I personally found sex to keep getting better and better to a degree I never thought possible, I jumped at her offer and said, "Well, how about next week?" So here we are. We're going to explore why and how, like fine wine, your sex life can get better as you age. We'll discuss why and how can this be an opportunity to discover new dimensions of your sensual self and your sexual relationship with yourself and your partner, if you have one. We're talking about pleasure and ecstasy you may not have known existed. And we're here to personally report that this can be a very exciting phase of life.

Jalaja has spent years on the frontlines working for peace and she continues to be a very grounded, sensual, embodied spiritual leader. And in case you haven't heard last week's show, I'll give you a brief bio.

In her earlier years, Jalaja learned Indian temple dance in South India. There she connected with an ancient lineage of priestesses who model the integration of spiritual and sexuality. Later she offered workshops on movement as a spiritual practice, co-creating a sanctuary space where women would slow down and listen deeply to their hearts and bodies. Eventually, this involved into a method called Circlework, an international circle work leadership training.

Jalaja Bonheim, PhD is now 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's gained international recognition for her groundbreaking work with Jewish and Palestinian women in the Middle East. She is the author of five books, one being *The Hunger for Ecstasy: Fulfilling the Soul's Need for Passion and Intimacy*, which, of course, was a big one for me. And her latest book is *Evolving Toward Peace: Awakening the Global Heart*.

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Now, when one of her first books -- I think it might have been her first book -- called Aphrodite's Daughters came out in 1997 -- I think that's when it was -- three different women recommended it to me within a couple of weeks' time. So naturally, I dashed out and bought it. And it's based on the sexual stories of ordinary American women. It shows the immensely important role sexuality plays in shaping our spiritual journey.

I was enthralled. The stories are so memorable that I can still recall a few of them to this day. And I think she might share a couple during this show. And so after she and I decided to do this show, I pulled out my two copies of Aphrodite's Daughters because I've always kept one for myself and one to share with others.

So welcome, Dr. Jalaja Bonheim.

Jalaja Bonheim: Thank you so much, Ellen. It's such a treat to be back again with you.

EE: Yeah, for me too. And I'm so glad you suggested that we explore this topic together.

So let's start with one of the things people think of when they think of women's aging. It has to do with menopause. Women are often told they'd be less sexual as they age. But let's explore what it really means. Now that's not even true for all women because when the estrogen-testosterone balance shifts, like when the estrogen production in a woman goes down, relative to their testosterone, which gives sexual drive, some women find they actually have a higher sexual drive but that's not true for everybody. And for most women, their sexuality and their erotic nature does seem to change. I think it really expands in many ways.

So let's explore this. Just where would you like to begin with that particular topic?

JB: Well, I love that you said that it expands because I think that is a key that if we only define our sexuality in the way that this culture does in terms of genital sexuality, we're missing the boat. So part of what I tell women is look at sexuality in a much bigger way, look at it as the movement of life force through your whole being. When women begin to do that, they begin to realize, wow, I have all this erotic energy moving through me. It's not gone at all. And as you mentioned, I think for many women it's actually stronger. But we have to learn how to relate to it in a new way because a lot of times the old ways just aren't working anymore for us so well.

EE: That's true. You just reminded me of something that expresses this and that is, oh, gosh, it was probably eight or ten years ago. I went with a friend to this -- I don't know. It was some expo, some erotic expo and they had speakers and they had people selling products and essential oils and sexual toys and lingerie and all this kind of stuff. It was in San Francisco.

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A couple of the women there, I got to talk with women who were making presentations. One of them was an ex-porn star who was actually highly regarded. I forget her name. I forget her state name, but she was actually quite beautiful. She was post-60 at that time when I met her. And there was also -- I think Annie Sprinkle was there.

As these women were talking and sharing and they would talk about their orgasmic energy that they could just experience on demand basically, they would just like run their fingers of one hand up the inner arm of their opposite arm, from their palm and up to their wrist to their inner elbow and up. You could see they would just suddenly undulate with this energy going right up their bodies and just this delicious smile and often a sound coming out of their mouth. It was just wonderful. All they had to do was think of something sensual and their orgasmic energy would just undulate through them. I was just fascinated because -- oh, I know this well now, but at the time I wasn't as familiar with that. So they were a great sort of example or induction.

JB: Yeah. And you know, it's so great because you're reminding of what -- one of the women that I interviewed, she said to me, "You know, I realized at some point that I had to make a choice to be a sexual woman." It doesn't just happen. It is a choice. And you are talking about women who made that choice, and it's a choice we have to make over and over. It's like if I want to learn to play the piano, I have to practice.

And so with sexuality too, I mean someone might be listening to you and saying, "Oh, I can run my hand up my arm and nothing happens." Well, these women have trained their bodies, they had opened, they had worked with their sexual energy and we can all do that. And I do think that as we age, it becomes actually easier to do that. We have more access to it.

So in my experience, women get so exquisitely sensitive and that's a lot of times not acknowledged at all.

EE: Yes. And it becomes, as you said, less genital, far more tuned into sensory experience and energy. So I think if I was listening to this, I would be asking. So how do you do that? How do you become more tuned into that? So let's discuss that a little bit. I have some ideas about it, but let's hear what you have to say.

JB: Well, I would say again, remember it begins with a choice. Once you make that choice, your body is there to guide you. It knows what it wants. And if we begin to really listen to what our body wants, it does tell us.

And so I think for a lot of women it begins with slowing down because if you're going too fast, you don't really know what your body is trying to tell you. And I see a lot of women who are caught up in that workaholic mode and then they want to have

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ecstatic sex, but they are so out of touch with their heart and with the natural rhythms of their own being.

So this flower of ecstatic, erotic energy, it grows out of a life that is lived in alignment with that. So a lot of times I tell couples you got to take more time because they think they can take two hours to make love, and that's going to be great. And I tell them about the tantric teachings where they say you have to have three days. And they go, "Wow, three days! I don't know if we can do that." But in my experience, it is very true that it takes time to drop into that space. It's not something that happens instantly.

So the sad thing is I hear from a lot of women that their partners, if they're with a man, a lot of men become less interested in sex. And I've heard a lot of women say, "He's just not interested anymore." I think part of it is that men, even more than women, have bought into this myth of genital sexuality and they get scared. "Oh, I'm not going to be able to maintain an erection. I'm not going to be able to function the way I used to." And so they just turn away from it.

In fact, it is such a wonderful opportunity because women have been waiting for the man to be able to not orgasm so quickly, to be able to stay with it, and finally it's possible. So the opportunities are amazing if partners can let go of this performance-driven image of what sex should look like.

EE: Yes. So I have a couple of things I want to piggyback on what you've said. One is when you talked about dropping into that space and really giving yourselves time to explore this realm, I do want to say that once you do that and the more often you do that, the easier it is to drop into that place in a shorter amount of time. So you don't always have to take three days. It's get to where you can just lay together with the intention of being sensual and then just allow and just kind of embrace and allow that energy to start to unfold and then it has a life of its own if you tap into that.

The other thing about what you said regarding men, two things. One is I did a survey of about 700 people or more than that. It's kind of accumulating people who are my subscribers and they skew a little bit older from like mid 30s to late 60s, and I really noticed that men much more than wanting just hot sex, they want deep intimacy with a spiritual connection. And if they could have hot sex with it, great; but they want that deep intimacy more than just hot sex. And they also want to give and they want their partner to be able to let go and get out of her head, which is what women would like to be able to teach too.

But based on what you said about men initiating and all that women saying their partners don't, a couple of months ago I had an urologist on my show with Boston Medical Center, Dr. Morgentaler, and he spoke -- because he sees men all the time who are coming to see him about their most intimate issues, usually around their genitals and so forth -- and he said so many men spoke of being afraid to initiate sex because it's something -- they say they don't want to leave their partner on if they can't fulfill the expectation that they think she has.

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So they're still thinking a traditional way like, "If I can't give her the hard on that I used to immediately, then I don't want to lead her on by even holding her hand." So women are becoming sensually starved with their partners and the men too. And so I think we have to let our partners, if we have them, know that, one, we really want that touch and we don't interpret that caressing or that cuddling or that hand holding or kissing, all of that, we don't necessarily interpret that as having to go to intercourse, let alone anything in between that and intercourse and we would love to explore all of the possible realms in between, things that we might not have done together before because we were into that sort of Masters and Johnson conventional paradigm of arousal and move toward intercourse and orgasm and then decline.

So it's a whole new arena and if we have a partner -- first of all, we're going to discuss how to explore this if we don't have a partner in depth. But if we do have a partner, it's really so important to communicate how things are changing for you and explore. Ask them how they're changing for your partner if it's a man especially. You can discuss what each of your concerns are, what your fears about your own response are, and your concerns about how the other person will respond or what they need and whether you can deliver. And that in itself deepens the intimacy. That in itself can create like a foundation for a deeper level of sensuality because now there's a deeper connection at a heart level.

JB: And I think you're so right about this longing for intimacy, true intimacy; that now it's not just driven by this need, this hormonal need, but that there is this deep love, this intimacy, this capacity for that that I think both men and women often don't have when they're young. So there is just such a depth. In some ways, it's like a time where everything we've created in our life comes to fruition.

So if we have created a relationship where the kind of communication that you're talking about is possible, it's going to serve you. If you have not, it's still possible and I have seen relationships really blossom and transform in ways that the partners would never have thought possible at an earlier age.

EE: Well, let's talk about that after the break.

JB: Okay.

EE: Okay. So it is time for a short break. Before we go, I want to just tell my listeners quickly about a gift I have. It's my hour-long audio and e-book called Beyond Orgasm: How to Have a More Deeply Connected Sexual Experience, which is right on point with what we're discussing. So you can find that at extatica.com on the homepage, or you can go to beyondorgasm.com and get to the same place. And the replays of the show and all of the Extatica radio shows are available streaming online or as MP3 downloads to take with you at extatica.com/show. You can also get the transcripts of the shows there.

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So this is Ellen Eatough with Jalaja Bonheim. Stay tuned for more on Women, Sex and Aging: The Best is Yet to Come.

[Commercial Break]

This is Extatica: The Way to an Erotic, Ecstatic Love Life. Do you have questions or comments for Ellen Eatough or her guests? Call in live at 1-866-472-5795 or send an email to <mailto:radio@show@extatica.com>. Now back to the program.

EE: Welcome back. This is Ellen Eatough on Extatica with Dr. Jalaja Bonheim, author of Aphrodite's Daughters, The Hunger for Ecstasy, and Evolving Toward Peace.

Before we get back to the subject of women, sex and aging and how the best is yet to come, I want to mention something you might have heard during the break that relates to this. It's my Love Unbound, music for lovemaking infused with Auditory Pheromones. It's great for all adults but especially good for older lovers, and this is because so many people who use this music while they're making love say that it does things that a lot of us would like as we get on in years, things like enhancing libido and arousal rates for both partners, enhances intimacy and a sense of spiritual connection.

If you're going for orgasm, it often helps orgasms be easier for women and helps release a lot of the cultural inhibitions and religious inhibitions for greater spontaneity. It also eases communication about sexual needs and desires. These are things we never expected when we produced this music infused with 74 layers of resonant frequencies. To learn more about that, go to getabettersexlife.com.

So before we went to break, Jalaja was about to tell us a little bit about discussions she's had with couples. So let's jump into that before we get down to individuals, which is such a juicy topic. What were you going to say about couples?

JB: Well, first I just want to say thank you so much for sending me that music, and I started listening to it and it is amazing. I can't wait to start using it in my circle, so I really recommend it. It's beautiful just as music. Very beautiful.

EE: Thank you.

JB: So I've seen couples who -- well, I think of this one couple that I know. They basically, if they had come to me as a counselor in their early years, I would have said get a divorce. I mean it was so bad. They were always fighting. He was always getting involved with other women. It was this constant power struggle. And now they have the most exquisite relationship, just beautiful. And in part it had to do with his hormones quieting down, but also with the steps of love that has been growing between them for so many years. And now I mean he was telling me, when they make love, it is just infinite. It's beautiful. In the first years of their connection, that

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would have been impossible. It was passionate but it didn't have that exquisite depth that it has now.

EE: I hope men are listening to this too because they need to know that women are just craving that, and women understand that men really do want intimacy too. I think a lot of men are getting a bad rap especially as they get older. Their desires change as well.

JB: They do. And I think for women, a big thing is letting go of our vanity and getting over our body image stuff.

EE: Yeah, that's a big one.

JB: Because our bodies aren't getting younger. And if we've really swallowed that beauty myth, then we're going to have trouble as we age with our own body. So I think it's really important that we understand that generally those judgments are coming from within ourselves. They are also not coming from the men. Most men are so happy if they have a passionate, erotic, alive woman.

EE: That's what they want more than anything.

JB: More than anything.

EE: You just said it, yes. They would rather have a passionate, alive, responsive, spontaneously erotic woman than a gorgeous playboy bunny that just lays there who says "ooh, aah" that's not genuine, yeah.

JB: Those who want a Playboy bunny are not the ones you want to be with anyway.

EE: No. So let's talk about something that I think is such a great phrase that I'd never heard before you describe it, which is "making love with God." As an intro to this, I want to segue between couples and individuals actually because in my own experience as my own sexuality has evolved, I found that sex can be actually an experience for me anyway of God making love through me, not making love with this God but God being everything. But somehow God just like -- God or consciousness, whatever phrase you use for Spirit or the Divine, but the Divine literally making love through me.

Actually, I interviewed years ago Rocco Errico who is a minister who teaches the clergy. I asked him, I said, "Do you think sex can be a gateway to the Divine?" He says, "No." He says, "Sex is Divine." It's like we are God expressed or pressed out into human form and sexuality is that. It's God expressed. And I just experienced that so directly now at this stage of my life.

And then you talk about that experience as an individual that older women especially, anybody, there's so many people who don't have partners; but I think a lot of

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women as we get older kind of bemoan the fact that we don't have a partner. We're afraid we'll never have a partner. We think we should have a partner having sexual. And if we don't, we're not sexual anymore but it doesn't have to be that way. So let's go into a little depth about making love with God, what it means and why every woman should do it.

JB: Yes. I think every woman should do it. Well, you know, something I encountered first when I went to India and in this tradition of Indian temple dance, these dances were temple priestesses. And when they reached puberty, they were actually married to God in this elaborate ritual. Now when we hear married to God, we tend to think of nuns where that means, okay, they're going to be celibate. But in that tradition it meant the very opposite. It meant that just exactly what you were describing. As they were making love, that divine energy was streaming through them.

So in that practice, they were also relating to their lovers as embodiments of the Divine. I find that in our culture we can get too hung up on the personal aspect of relationship. The personal is very beautiful; it's very important. But there is also a dimension where each individual is pure, divine, sacred masculine, sacred feminine energy that is way beyond the personal. It's a very powerful thing to experience. I think I've heard many stories from people who have had experiences of that where it really wasn't about me, my personality and you, your personality. It was something way just beyond that just streaming through.

So when I came into contact with this energy and with this tradition that really cultivated, taught you to cultivate that energy --

EE: What a wonderful training you were getting. You were taught to do this, right?

JB: Yeah. Initially, some aspect of it seem sort of simple-minded to me coming from the Western tradition. For example, in the temples in India there are these deities, these statues. And every morning that priest will dress them and almost like dolls. They would give them breakfast. And to me initially this seemed almost childish. But then I began to understand that there is a practice of calling forth the inner lover. In the beginning stages, you are using your imagination. You are imagining this lover who is the most perfect lover, who knows you in your most intimate depths and loves you completely.

Now, in our culture when a child has this "Oh, you have an imaginary friend," so we make this distinction between "Well, that's just imaginary," meaning it isn't real. But what I learned in this tradition is that if you continue to work with your imagination, it can lead you to a place where this inner lover comes alive and it is completely real. It is no longer imaginary. In my book, *Aphrodite's Daughters*, there are a few stories of women who had that experience.

EE: Yes. Could you tell one? I would love to hear one of those stories.

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JB: Yeah. I mean there's this very funny one of this woman who decided that she -- she was brought up in a Catholic household, and she was told that making love to God was the most ecstatic thing. And she wanted it; she wanted it tremendously. Now, this woman, she was a very sexually erotic woman and when she was 14 she had a boyfriend. For three years they made passionate love and she loved it. But she thought there is something else, and it's much better and I want it.

So at 17 years old, she joins this convent and she's looking for God in every rosary bead, in every genuflection. She's bored to death and she's not finding anything. She thinks, "Well, I must be doing it wrong." And then at night she would go to bed and she would describe going to bed in these little cubicles almost that they had. She would call God and God would come and God would make love to her. She describes it as having these incredible heart orgasms.

Now, the funny thing is that thought this wasn't it. She thought there was something else that all the other nuns were doing, and she was the only one that wasn't getting it. She couldn't figure out what it was. She describes this experience of what happened when she would have her period. Now, do we have time? Do we have a few more minutes?

EE: Yes, yes.

JB: Good. Let me tell you this. It's a great story. She says there was this vow of poverty. When you had your period, you had to go to the Mother Superior and you say, "Mother Superior, may I have a Kotex?" And the Mother Superior, she would get out her key ring and there were all these keys. She would go to one door and another cabinet and another cabinet, and then she would give you the one Kotex. You were only allowed to have one because it was the vow of poverty.

So for two years -- her name was Theresa -- Theresa went through this very obediently every month when she got her period. And then one month came where she says somehow things were different. She goes to the Mother Superior and she says, "Mother Superior, may I have a Kotex," and the Mother Superior gets out all her keys and she goes through this. Suddenly Theresa thinks to herself "My God, they have locked away sex." She said that thought had never occurred to me before.

Mother Superior finally gets to the cabinet with a Kotex. She pulls one out and she gives it to Theresa. Theresa says, "Mother Superior, I would like to have two." Mother Superior looks at her very sternly and says, "Well, Theresa, you know you can have as many as you like but only one at a time." She says, "Mother Superior, I want two." And that's when the dam burst. Mother Superior says, "No." Theresa just explodes and she starts cursing her. She started saying, "You fucking bitch!" And all these things just start gurgling out of her. Everything that she has been repressing just burst to the surface.

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So that was the end of her career as a nun. She went on to become a tantric teacher because she realized that she had already this knowledge of how to make love with God. It was inside of her, and she had been looking outside to these religious authorities for something that was already inside of her. She had that knowledge, and so many women do have that knowledge. So it's something once we understand that it is possible and that there are tools for cultivating this, whether we are doing it alone or with a partner, it's just a most wonderful thing to bring into our sexuality and into our spirituality both.

EE: Oh, I just love that story. Thank you so much for sharing it. I haven't read that for so many years. I remembered parts of it that it was so delicious to hear you tell it. I think with so many women, as we get older, it's kind of like I'm just not going to put up with it anymore. People start feeling like all the things that we've done to get approval from others, to get love or to not be annihilated is sort of like, "I just don't care anymore. Let them deal with it. I'm just going to be who I am." I think that's related. I think it's sort of like we have to be who we are sensually, sexually as well.

We're going to take a break now before we jump into the next thing. This is going to be our last break. This is Ellen Eatough with Dr. Jalaja Bonheim. You can get replays of this program and all Extatica radio episodes, both streaming online or downloads, plus transcripts of the show at extatica.com/show. Oh, and I do want to say that that book she was telling a story from, I want to mention it again because it's still in print, isn't it, Jalaja?

JB: It is, yes.

EE: Yeah, after all those years. This is a rarity that a book is in print for what? I don't know, 17 years in these days. It's called Aphrodite's Daughters by Jalaja Bonheim. Okay. So here we go. We'll be right back.

[Commercial Break]

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EE: Welcome back. This is Ellen Eatough with Dr. Jalaja Bonheim. And we're Exploring Women, Sex and Aging: The Best is Yet to Come. By the way, Jalaja's website is evolvingtowardpeace.com. I'll say that again later, but again it's evolvingtowardpeace.com.

So before we went to break, we were discussing making love with God, and she told a wonderful story about a woman in a convent doing exactly that and then just sort of like blowing the whole thing off. But I know that making love with God is a very abstract concept. It might be considered a little woo-woo. So let's talk about that in

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a little more depth to try to ground it in a little more practical manner. So I'll hand that over to you, Jalaja.

JB: Thank you, Ellen. I'm glad you're bringing that up because I don't talk about it very much because to a lot of people it does sound so woo-woo. In fact, it isn't at all. It is just a very simple practice of approaching yourself and your partner as vessels of sacred energy. I think that especially if you are in a long-term relationship, it's so easy to get mired in all the everyday chores and the ideas we create about each other, the images. And it is so healing and purifying to come back to that commitment of I am going to relate to this person as a sacred being.

EE: So valuable.

JB: We long for that. We each long to be seen and because it is a mark of the deepest respect. And so to bring that expression of respect into our relationships, that's really what we're talking about if we are in a relationship. If we are not in a relationship, then it can be a wonderful process that brings us back to the awareness that we are desirable because I see it in a lot of women who are single. And let's face it, more and more women over the age of 60 are single. And what can so easily happen is that we just give up on our sexuality. We just give up on our erotic energy.

EE: And the consequence of that is that our essential energy starts to shut down and then we're not actually conveying that erotic energy on a subconscious level to other people so we actually reduce our chances of finding a partner when we do that and reverse us through. So if you keep yourself eroticized and sexually alive, that energy also is palpable to other people and just not in a seductive way but in a way that's just appealing because it's the vital life force but that's also appealing for potential partners. Who knows?

JB: Yes, it is. It's attractive. Yeah, I totally agree. I think it's also healthy. I think it makes us feel younger and more alive and more vital. And so I really would recommend for any woman who is single to build little rituals into her life where she takes a wonderful bath or she puts lotion on her body or she dances, whatever you can do to awaken that energy. This whole idea of making love to God, use it playfully. Just imagine, well, what if I had this lover, what would I feel like? What would he be like? It's a great way of getting those juices flowing.

EE: Yes, imagining that as the divine masculine as you were saying, being the divine feminine.

JB: Yeah. I remember in one of my circles, there was a Middle Eastern woman. She said she wanted to teach us some belly dance. And I thought, "Oh, great. She's going to tell us 'Rotate your hips this way or that.'" What she had us do was close our eyes and then she said, "I want you to imagine that you are the most beautiful woman alive. You are the most desirable, sensual woman."

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She had us breathe through that image, that awareness. And then she invited the women to move, to move their body from that place. And then gradually she had us open our eyes, and it was amazing the way that women were moving. It was so beautiful. So that sets a small example about how we can use our imagination to nurture our own sensuality, our erotic energy. It brings me back to what I said in the very beginning. It is a choice. We need to make that choice.

EE: Indeed. And that's a very powerful exercise. This also reminds me that -- well, there's a lot of research about the health benefits of regular sex, whether it's with yourself or with a partner, including heart health and better skin and nails and so forth and hair, but also one of the top three things that men find attractive in a woman is confidence. Many studies have shown this. What you are saying is if you are envisioning yourself as the most beautiful woman on the planet, that can help but enhance your sense of confidence and your energy that you convey, that energetic of confidence.

JB: Exactly, yeah.

EE: As well as the sensuality and eroticism, just the energy of self-confidence like grounded in your femininity and your sense of value and beauty as a woman at a very deep level.

JB: Right. And to understand that it's not coming from the outer physical body.

EE: Exactly.

JB: It's coming from another dimension. So no matter --

EE: And this could only make us happier and more peaceful within ourselves.

JB: Yes, yes, yes, absolutely.

EE: And more fun.

JB: Well, definitely more fun, definitely more fun, yeah. One thing I've always found intriguing was in Greek mythology we have Aphrodite, who is the Goddess of Love. Aphrodite has this -- they describe it as a girdle. I think of it more as some kind of like belly dance belt or something. Whoever wears Aphrodite's girdle is irresistibly attractive. And now and then one of the other goddesses will come to Aphrodite and say, "Oh, by the way, would you mind loaning me your girdle for the night?"

I think that is a fascinating image because it really conveys that there is this divine energy that makes us attractive and that this energy doesn't come from the personality, it doesn't come from our body. It comes from a divine source. And we can ask for it. We can say, "I want Aphrodite's girdle. I want to be wearing that

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tonight," and to feel that we are wearing that and that there is this source in us of magnetism, of erotic energy that we can call upon.

EE: Oh, I love that. It's such a great story and I love that imagery. I actually got chills when you described it as borrowing Aphrodite's girdle and sort of the belly dancing attire. I want to bring up something that's very practical and concrete, and that is conditioned association and conditioned response.

You've heard of Pavlov's dogs where he gives the dogs the food and they salivate. And he rings a bell at the same time and so they salivate. And then he does this often enough that eventually he rings the bell and there's no food present. There's nothing for them to smell but they salivate at the sound of the bell. We can do this with our own bodies, our own energy.

So if we make love with ourselves and start having these associations in our minds and having this erotic or even orgasmic response, we can do that and stroke the inside of our arms. And then later when we're not in such an intimate situation, we can stroke the inside of our arms and just immediately have that conditioned response to that erotic sensual experience. And we can do the same thing with eroticizing various parts of our bodies. You can do this with your partner. When your partner or yourself are very aroused, you can tweak different parts of the body like the inner thighs or the back of the neck or the nipples or whatever it is and start to bring orgasmic response or sensation into these parts of the body.

I also want to say something about orgasm because we know that orgasm can be the contraction of the pelvic floor, muscles and so forth, but orgasm can also be a state. It can be the most delicious state where that Kundalini energy, that serpent energy that you were describing in the story of Adam and Eve last week that has been shut down in our culture from the earliest creation stories, but as that energy starts to free up and we allow it to move up our spines and just allow our bodies to move with that natural responsive energy, it's actually like going into an orgasmic state. You may or may not have a peak orgasm, you kind of go over the top, but the journey can be so delicious.

And that state is what I think I was observing in these women I mentioned at the sex expo who were stroking the inside of their arms. Whether they were having a genital orgasm or not, I can't say but they were clearly delighting in that orgasmic state which is a full body response and a full energy body response. That is where sex expands into this whole new realm. It becomes so much bigger than just our physical bodies and so much more satisfying than just a physical orgasm. And even this heart orgasm you mentioned, I mean I've had a few of those. They're totally unexpected. I mean that really feels very physical in the heart. I don't know what's going on there, but it can be very powerful.

But I just want to validate people's experience of this fluid moving energy state that can cause undulations in your body. It might cause jerky movements which can be called kriyas in Tantra. This is like energy moving or trying to unblock itself. I do

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work with people on unblocking energy that has been shut down for a variety of reasons, but I just want to make sure that we expand the definition of sensual and erotic energy because a lot of people are probably experiencing this and don't know what to call it or what it is or if other people have experienced it. I just want to share with anybody listening that this is a really valid and delicious experience of that life force just flowing through you.

JB: I would say it's the most delicious.

EE: It is. It is.

JB: It's the most delicious.

EE: It is the god energy flowing through, whether you're on your own or with somebody else.

JB: I mean because you can stay in it for hours.

EE: Yeah.

JB: It's unbelievable. Yeah.

EE: We came up with this plan for this discussion. I want to tell you that I did a Google search on women, sex, and aging and so forth, and I came across something on askmen.com. It's a very big website. There was a list of the top 10 things we love about older women, and number three was older women have more sexual experience. I'd like to go into details. They added to that, they've gotten over the little insecurities and anxieties that can negatively impact their sex lives.

They're comfortable in their own skin. They know how to make the bedroom exciting and interesting. They've gone beyond bedroom basics because their experience makes them more willing to try new things and men love that. The number two reason they love older women was that more women have more relationship experience, and you know that includes intimacy.

So we could discuss so much but we're coming to close in our time here. But is there anything else you would like to say in conclusion about this topic, just a little time we have left, Jalaja?

JB: Well, yes. There's one thing I'd like to say and that is that in all traditional cultures, women supported women. I think that we need the support of other women, which is why I'm so committed to women circles. First of all, in women circles there is incredibly strong Kundalini energy. So even though we might not be working on something directly sexual, this life force energy, this orgasmic energy is awakening, is being nourished. Second of all, we need that support. We need to give each other

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the support that this is good and that this is possible for each other because we're not going to hear much of this in the outer world.

EE: This is so true. I have a women's group meeting tonight, so I can't wait to tell them about this.

JB: Yeah, yeah, we need this. We need as women to support each other on this journey. I think it's crucial. I don't think we can do it alone.

EE: Absolutely. And that's one thing about the feminine energy is that networking net, that cross-lateral nurturing of each other.

I want to tell people about your other website too. Correct me if I'm wrong. Is it instituteforcirclework.org or theinstitute?

JB: You got it right, instituteforcirclework.org.

EE: Okay.

JB: And you can read it. I'm about to leave for the Middle East and do some more circles for the Jewish and Palestinian women there. So you can read all about that.

EE: Absolutely. What a fantastic work you're doing there. And then your other website again is evolvingtowardpeace.com.

So thank you so much, Jalaja Bonheim. This has been just so rich and fun.

JB: Thank you. It's been fun for me.

EE: We appreciate it.

JB: I really enjoyed talking to you, Ellen.

EE: Okay. So again, if you'd like a transcript of this or any of my other Extatica shows and links to Jalaja Bonheim's websites, visit extatica.com/show.

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