Sexual Agreements
A Guide for Reawakening Sexual Passion

Amara

Nourishing Arts
Phoenix, Arizona
Becoming Whole

The woman
whose speech and actions are the same—
her feet become worthy of worship.

Keeping our word is the alchemy to become free
and whole.

Try and make amends for any broken hearts
or broken promises;

if you cannot do so in form
then prayer can heal a debt with the light you
can send,

and even a man can become
this precious gold.

By Tukaram
Translated by Daniel Ladisky
The Gift
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Foreword

I am really pleased that Amara has written this book. Her long-time experience in dealing with couples concerning the melding of sexuality and spirituality has made her uniquely qualified to present this material. The important aspect of this book centers on the critical point of getting couples to discuss openly their sexual temperaments and needs. Too often, couples form relationships without deeply investigating their partner's sexual nature, which can create conflicts that remain unresolved for years.

This book goes a long way toward enlightening people on how to open the doors of discussion and get them talking to each other in positive and constructive ways.

The two main causes of conflict within modern relationships develop from either sexual or financial problems. This book goes to the very heart of finding workable solutions for people to discover satisfaction and joy within their chosen sexual lifestyle.

I highly recommend this book to anyone who is searching for a deeper connection between their sexual and spiritual natures.

—Hsi Lai

author of The Sexual Teachings of the White Tigress
and The Sexual Teachings of the Jade Dragon
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Introduction

Within our intimate relationships it is profoundly beautiful to reveal our innermost sexual needs and desires. Although expressing our sexual feelings may be challenging or uncomfortable at first, many of us are starting to realize how costly it is to hold them inside. Keeping our thoughts about sexual concerns hidden from view is like holding a bird in a golden cage. We long to express our sexual feelings in order to feel the sky.

The truth is, much unhappiness and resentment in relationships stems from the omission of good, clear communication about sex. Sex should not be something unclear inside our intimate relationships for it is the most exquisite and natural expression we have as human beings. When sexual harmony exists between partners they can create almost anything. At the core there is happiness, vitality, and peace. When sexual communication is murky, however, everything from finances and creativity to the raising of children is affected. Relationships eventually suffer and partners settle for far less than what they had hoped.

Many of us were brought up in families where all things sexual were kept secret. Sexual frustrations were hidden from view and were often silently inherited from the prior generation. Long-held grudges, anger, or sexual disappointments were stoically carried for a lifetime. Few of us have much experience in articulating the sexual feelings that arise in the course of an intimate relationship. Generally, we close down when intense sexual issues come up. Some may even believe that talking about sex ruins the fun. Nothing could be further from the truth. Keeping things hidden or suppressed for years is not fun. In my own
experience, sharing honestly opens the way for a far more intimate and alive connection with life.

Even though every one of us was brought into the world through a sexual union, the sexual agreements or the sexual rules we live by often remain vague and unexpressed. It is no wonder so few live within healthy, sexually fulfilling relationships.

How do I know this? I look at people’s faces. After sharing sacred sexuality teachings with men and women around the world for the past 18 years, I have come to recognize what sexual fulfillment looks like in a person’s face. Have you ever seen people just after they have made beautiful love? They have a certain glow about them. Their faces are serene, tranquil, and happy. Yet how many of us have this gentle peace in our eyes? Most people are seeking or hoping to find what is missing, and after a while this restlessness shows up in their face.

This is why becoming conscious about sexual agreements can bring so much fresh energy and deep happiness into one’s life. Yes, in the beginning being honest about sexual feelings brings up things that may be hard to face. In the long run daring to tell and listen to the truth is worth every moment.

The following insights are based upon many years of seeing what frequently occurs when individuals begin making agreements that involve sex. This work also comes out of my learning to live with clear sexual agreements in my own relationships for the last 20 years.

Recently during my travels, I have encountered a growing number of people who are embracing far more accepting attitudes about sex. Many are now hungry for more caring, respectful, and fulfilling ways to explore the deeper realms of intimate
sexual passion. They are now ready to experience the subtle layers of their sensuous selves. Yet, for most it is a new terrain and there are few maps to guide them.

Who do we talk with about our private sexual questions? When we begin to create personal agreements that fulfill our unique needs and desires, are we breaking ground into new forms of relationships or are we foolishly deviating from hundreds of years of tried-and-true “conventional” rules of sexual conduct? By making agreements that give and ask for greater room to explore ourselves sexually are we just trying to have our cake and eat it too? Or are we genuinely exploring new kinds of agreements within our intimate relationships about what is and what is not okay to do sexually?

Unfortunately, there is no simple answer to the question of sexual freedom within a relationship. It is a very private and personal agreement between partners. One thing I do know is that when one begins exploring outside the accepted rules that most people live by, serious questions arise. As soon as some of the long-held inhibitions about sex start to shift, a new curiosity sets in. Many partners want to try different things and explore new sexual possibilities. An idea of greater sexual freedom arises. There is the idea of greater communication and more sensitivity, but there is little experience. A lot of miscommunication, fear, and deep emotions can rise to the surface.

This is why starting at the beginning—learning to make sexual agreements—is so important. First, you need to become aware of what sexual rules you already operate within. If your sexual life is working for you—great. By reading this work, perhaps your agreements will only need refinement and you will become even clearer about what you enjoy or do not enjoy about
your sexual life. For others, sharing honestly or communicating in this way will create a major shift—especially for those who have never actually discussed their personal sexual feelings with their partners, leaving them as vaguely assumed rules of accepted behavior.

For whatever reason, honest communication about sex can trigger emotional upheavals within our relationships. When we begin to express intimate sexual feelings our fear, jealousy, possessiveness, or anger can easily arise. Sexual energy is very powerful, making it important that we be patient and tolerant with our self and our partner. It takes time and great care to make changes in our sexual ways. There are going to be doubts and mistakes. I haven’t met anyone who started creating sexual agreements without making some mistakes along the way.

This book does not recommend any particular sexual behaviors, nor does it express any preferential views toward open relationships or monogamy. It does, however, provide an opportunity for you to clean up the murky places lying dormant in your sexual communications, giving you more space, pleasure, and beauty within your relations. It helps you create the kind of sexual agreements you would enjoy living with.

We can consciously honor our individual sexual needs and desires while making intimate agreements that serve each partner’s truth, creating sexual agreements in which honesty, trust, and freedom flourish. Yes, this may be a radical idea and it can be difficult. Sexual issues do have a way of getting to the stickiest part of our existence. The secret to having more beautiful, deeply felt sexual pleasure—and to feeling the trust and enduring support of our loved ones—is to become more conscious.
This requires a commitment to explore the various sexual beliefs and agreements we have built our lives upon, especially those agreements that keep our natural sexual energy limited and dull.

Becoming conscious is the way. Consciousness within our relations is the great awakening. It is only because of fear that consciousness remains cluttered. At some point, however, one notices how much of our precious life is wasted by living in the confusion and doubt we carry about sex. Even though there may be uncertainty, as we begin cleaning up the clutter—asking questions, sharing feelings, expressing our deepest fears—something wonderful begins to happen. Our relations become more playful and our hearts more open. Creating clear conscious agreements based on a foundation of sensitive awareness and intimate care allows us to safely soar across the sky.

Becoming conscious simply means finding the courage to continuously reflect, express, notice, and listen. In the long run it is profoundly healing to be honest. Creating conscious agreements opens the gateway to the sweet realms of endearing intimacy we are so afraid, yet so hungry, to feel.
Chapter One

Common Mistakes and Resolutions

Normally we think of an intimate agreement as an established contract between two people. However, if we observe more closely we will see that a good agreement is actually a living, changing entity. As we proceed, rather than viewing agreements as static statements that have been set in stone, it is helpful to remember they are actually moving streams of our consciousness made of the continual fluctuations of our ever-changing feelings and perceptions. With this in mind, making conscious agreements becomes a way of communicating with clarity from one moment to the next.

That sounds great, but what about living in a real, live relationship where there are disagreements, exhaustion and all sorts of issues going on at the same time? What about the real chaos that happens in relationships? When the real movement of life comes on strong, this is the time your intimate agreements will be most tested, to see if they are strong enough to make it through the worst storms.

Even if you do not go through all the steps described in this book, if you can slow down and become more present to your
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feelings and those of your partner, your intimate agreements are gradually going to improve. When life becomes chaotic, it is easy to become irritated, impatient, or angry with your partner. The agreements you have in place with yourself and with others will give you the wherewithal to weather the worst storms life has to offer.

Disagreements and conflicts arise whenever there is a need to more deeply connect. These are signs that our most intimate needs and desires are neither being expressed nor heard. The conflict intensifies because both partners want their points of view to prevail. Force is needed to defend their positions.

Conflict and disagreement are not necessarily bad. They are, however, a sure sign that something needs looking into. Like a storm that you know is coming, a fight is a tremendous build up and release of pent-up energy. When expressed clearly it is like a thunderstorm bringing vitality to the situation. When dragged out over time and allowed to come up again and again, fights feel like months of dreary rain. Even though a good verbal release may be just what is needed to shift things, chronic arguing will never resolve or get to the truth of what is causing the conflict.

The solution to fighting is simple. Agree to listen to each other’s point of view no matter what. A way to do this is to dramatically slow down the talking and repeat what the other has said. When we have to repeat what the other has said it trains us to actually listen before blurring out our own reactions. Most miscommunication occurs because we swallow the other’s words the way we eat food—unconsciously. We do not actually hear each other, and we end up hurling reactions back and forth. Fortunately, there is a way to communicate more gracefully.
Use this example when communicating:

One person speaks about one issue at a time, and the other listens. Before responding to the issue, the listener says, “What I heard you say is ________.”

Once the speaker feels that the essence of the issue has been spoken accurately, the listener can then respond by expressing his or her own feelings.

**Speaker:** “You talk with Susie more than you ever talk with me. What’s going on here? You never talk with me on the phone for hours.”

**Listener:** “What I heard you say is you don’t want me to talk to Susie on the phone.”

**Speaker:** “No, that’s not really what I am saying. What I meant was that I feel jealous when you talk with Susie for so long, and I don’t know what is happening between you.”

**Listener:** “What I heard you say is you feel jealous when I talk so much with Suzie and you don’t know what is happening. Is that what you are saying?”

**Speaker:** “Yes, that’s the essence of what I am saying.”

**Listener:** “The way I feel about this is…”

Not until the Speaker feels that the essence of what was said has been repeated can the Listener then respond. Now the Listener can become the Speaker. This continues until both people have been able to express themselves clearly and both feel that they have been heard. Slow down communication this way any time tempers flare or irritations persist.
What if my partner breaks an agreement?

We have all broken agreements, particularly when we say one thing and then do another. It doesn't feel good to be on either side. Broken agreements can foster tension and mistrust. There is a way, however, to bypass all the drama and emotional battles that ensue. Rather than argue over who did what or who said what, determine why the agreement is not working in the first place. In other words, it is useless to blame each other. Take another look at the agreement itself.

What you need to keep in mind is that if an agreement is occasionally broken it doesn't mean the other person doesn't love you. If agreements are chronically broken this is a sign that you do not want to make agreements with each other. Before you begin the process of making sexual agreements, make sure you have the heart space to do so. Also, make sure you have the willingness to learn from your mistakes.

Most of us keep agreements we like, and we tend to break agreements we don't like. Within a broken agreement, something is being resisted. Something about the agreement is not truly agreeable. For example, if I promise to work out three times a week and then don't do it, there is something false, something unrealistic, and something within this agreement that doesn't resonate for me. When I am in resistance, I won't do it. Even though I said that I wanted to be thinner, and that I should work out more, I broke the agreement. The solution is simple: make a better agreement—one that is more realistic, more in alignment with my real needs and my real desires.

This is not always easy because creating clear agreements requires continuous attention and refinement. I still make mis-
takes. When I do make a mistake with my actions or words—even if I unintentionally hurt someone—I have learned to see the mistake as a signal to wake up and take responsibility. This may mean apologizing or expressing my feelings again until every issue is expressed and heard. We can either be crushed by our mistakes or we can learn to understand each other better.

**Harmonious agreements**

When our intimate agreements are working our lives flow smoothly—we have more energy, are more passionate, and far more creative. We can also fully enjoy the comforts of intimacy. When a good agreement is being made—one that includes the sexual needs and desires of both—the whole process of sharing and talking will feel relaxed and easy. You will know when you have created an understanding between you that is mutually beneficial because living these agreements will generate greater trust and intimacy, and more love between you.

The most important element in creating successful sexual agreements is more communication, not less. More sensitivity and care are needed. My internal agreement is with my spirit that says I am going to express my feelings, my hurts, my mistakes, and my desires, and that I will say what I feel with whom I’m in a relationship. I know that I may not always be saying things appropriately or hearing things accurately. I also know that I am sensitive about sexual issues—even after all these years—and that it is okay for me to have fragile feelings and sensitive spots. I have an agreement with myself that even if I make mistakes, and it takes a long time to mature, I am going to continue being as conscious and open as I can about my true sexual needs and desires.
Mistake One: Misunderstanding the Agreement

Over the years, the most common error I have encountered when partners are making relationship agreements is that they have different ideas about what they are agreeing to. One person hears one thing and the other person hears something else. One person remembers certain things that were said and forgets others. Yet, most of the time, partners are convinced an agreement was reached. In reality, there was usually a discussion, but rarely was an actual agreement made.

Most often it’s because they are in too much of a hurry. When partners are making agreements that involve sex, very sensitive feelings are brought up. Understandably, there is a tendency to brush over details and avoid the most highly charged issues.

What to do? Slow down. Start simple. Write it down

It may sound tedious, but in the beginning it is necessary to put the agreement in writing. Later, when you have a good track record in keeping, remembering, and understanding each other’s perceptions of what the agreement is, you can skip writing things down.

Much will be said and each of you will remember different things, depending on what you want to hear, or what is important to you. It is impossible to remember it all. It’s even harder to remember the difference between what was just being talked about and what was really agreed upon. Chances are you are probably both new to this.
Make an agreement, and then specifically discuss how each of you understands the agreement

If there are major differences between your interpretations of the agreement, go back to step one. Talk things over again. Usually, there are several things you are trying to lump together that need to be more carefully considered. Most of the time when agreements are broken, feelings get hurt and relationships are torn apart because there wasn’t a clear agreement in the beginning. Neither partner took the time to understand the other person’s points of view.

Discuss the meaning of key words

Thousands of times I’ve heard one person say, for example, “We agreed to an open relationship.” And when I asked, “Did your partner agree to this?” The response was always, “Yes, we both agreed to have an open relationship.” Then, we would dig deeper and find out that they had two completely different interpretations about what an “open relationship” meant. In your discussions, make sure you talk about the meaning of key words you use. Many transgressions are unconscious and are made even though each person feels he or she has carefully abided by the agreement. Something within an agreement may have been spoken in a particular way; however, both interpreted key words differently. Whenever you are not sure whether you are on the same page, it is always wise to ask each other, “What do you mean by ______?” You cannot expect each other to keep agreements if neither of you really understands what the other means by certain words.
Get a third person involved

It’s hard to see the places you are glossing over by yourself. Therefore, it can be very helpful to involve a third party—another person who has no emotional investment in your process. Their purpose is not to figure out, resolve, or suggest anything. A neutral third person can be invited to help you see your blind spots. Make sure they understand that they are not to offer any opinions—but are merely there to help clarify cloudy areas and point out places where you both are unclear in your communication.

If you cannot bring in a third person, I suggest that before agreeing to anything, you write down the essence of your agreements and wait for a few days. Then go over them again together. You will see several things you missed.

If you do need someone to be more than a neutral observer, I suggest you find a therapist or a mentor, or find someone you both know and trust.

Mistake Two: Boundaries vs. Agreements

It’s important to understand the difference between boundaries and agreements. A boundary is a dividing line that separates one thing from another. Because boundaries are illusions, they will be resisted. No one likes to be bound, and no one likes to be told what they can and cannot do for very long. This is one of the areas where mistakes are most commonly made. Partners want to create boundaries because they want to stay safe.

Make sure you understand that boundaries are not agreements. If you look at them honestly, they are nothing more than
attempts to control what you want to happen. It’s similar to building a wall between warring countries. You can be assured that the battle will about that wall.

The difference between boundaries and agreements is significant. This is all about how agreements are made.

With a boundary, I say to my partner, “Never do this or that. If you do, I’m out of here. It’s my boundary. Cross it and the relationship is over.”

An agreement, on the other hand, starts with heart. Perhaps I say, “I want to dress really sexy when we go out on a date, but I am very sensitive and vulnerable here. I have a lot of fear about this. So I am asking you to be sensitive to my fear. I am asking you to be sensitive to my vulnerable places.”

Or perhaps jealousy is an issue. I might say, “Look, I don’t want to be jealous of so and so, but at this moment I am, so I need you to be sensitive about this.”

Agreements are openings to explore new territory together. We make agreements because there is an area that we both agree is new, potentially risky, yet worth exploring.

Make agreements that are about “asking” instead of “demanding”

Boundaries generally come with a demand to do or not do such and such. An agreement is a request, not a demand. In the long run, agreements are far more enduring, safer, and more liberating than boundaries. When starting an agreement, the attitude with which it is made is as important as what is actually said.

You will know if your agreements have heart by the way you feel after your talks. If you are tense, agitated, or tired, chances are you will have more to talk about in order to reach a place of
true agreement. This may take some time, so be patient. When you feel relaxed and refreshed, chances are you have shared and made agreements with heart.

It should be noted that there are circumstances where definite “boundaries” might be appropriate. For example, violent behavior would mean “the relationship is over.” This text is meant for partners who have basic agreements already in place, and who are looking for refinement.

**Mistake Three: Making Agreements at the Wrong Time**

From my experience, partners usually think they are in agreement. Each thinks everything is fine—until something happens. Then it quickly becomes obvious that things are anything but fine. This is often the moment partners recognize the need for an agreement. Unfortunately, however, the worst time to make agreements is when someone is hurt or defensive.

*Make agreements only when you are both calm and in a good place with each other*

Clear agreements are not made during arguments. During fights, tears, or silences are not good times to negotiate anything. Frequent arguments, however, are signs that you need to talk, and that an agreement is missing between you.

If you have argued and you see the need for an agreement, make time to talk after things have cooled off. Resist the temptation to resolve things while emotions are highly charged. You may want to agree to only make agreements when you both are ready and want to talk calmly.
This is an agreement I have used for years: *I will never go to bed angry, with unresolved issues or hurt feelings hanging in the air with my partner.* So I have an agreement (with myself) to make peace before sleep. If an issue persists and needs more time to resolve, I will ask for a temporary truce. I will make a gesture and ask for peace before we sleep. This has proven highly effective and often helps resolve larger issues much more quickly. It is almost as if the dreamtime, instead of digging deeper trenches, is used to help heal.

**Mistake Four: True Feelings Remain Hidden**
The hardest part of making agreements is to get to the bottom of your true feelings. Because desires, fears, and things you want to explore are unknown and always changing, it is quite a challenge to be true. This is the beauty of making agreements. It is actually a way to gain deeper insights into yourself and your partner. Although you may feel vulnerable, it is far more dangerous to delve deep into a relationship with unspoken, unconscious issues. If you can approach making agreements as if you were explorers—out to discover new ways to relate to each other—it will be a lot easier.

During the course of your relationship you may discover new desires, fears, or insecurities. Rarely, when partners begin sharing intimate sexual feelings, do they intentionally hide things from each other or lie. However, because sensitive areas are being discussed, a lot of emotions start churning and sometimes important things are left unsaid. Many times, one partner is afraid to say something because it might hurt the other person—so the truth is avoided, or only a partial truth is told.
Often, it is only later that partners even realize that feelings were left out. *This is a common part of the process.* Things will be left out because feelings and reactions are going to come up that you could not possibly have imagined or anticipated.

*Agree to communicate no matter what*

If you knew all the right things to say and knew what your partner’s reaction would be, you would not need to make agreements. But you cannot predict what’s going to happen in the future or how you are going to feel about it.

There are no guarantees, and no one can control the outcome. What you can do is agree to communicate no matter what. You can agree to talk about what does come up, to say what works and what does not work for you, and you can agree to listen to each other. These are probably the most important agreements of all.

The reason to make agreements is to intentionally bring up thoughts, desires, feelings, and unspoken issues. This will allow you to become more conscious—which is the ultimate purpose of making agreements.

*Be as honest as you can*

The best you can do is to make a commitment to be as honest as you possibly can. When feelings change, be honest. Don't hide. The more honest you are, the clearer your agreements will be.

*Speak the unspeakable*

Although risky and scary, speaking the unspeakable will always lead to greater openness and possibilities between the two
of you. Yes, there is the potential that what you have to say will hurt, or will be experienced as uncomfortable by your partner. If you want to relate more deeply, finding the courage to say those difficult things is well worth it.

Hiding desires will never erase them. Repressing what is longed for will not remove that longing, no matter how hard you try. Speaking the unspeakable, while it will not always lead you to getting what you want, will take the charge away.

*Share your needs and desires. Share your fears, insecurities, and doubts*

Let’s say that your partner loves to dance, for example, but this is not your favorite thing to do. Your partner wants to go dancing with a particular woman—nothing sexual, but you are not crazy about the idea. For some reason, even though you have an agreement that it’s okay for your partner to go out and dance with another woman, something about this particular woman is not okay.

What to do? It’s simple. You just say what each situation brings up for you. Instead of building a reservoir of unspoken grievances and hidden jealousies, you can simply say, “Yes, I was jealous of so and so,” or “I felt hurt when this happened.”

*Do not hold back out of fear of hurting the other person*

What often happens is that one says, “Well, I agreed to this, so I shouldn’t say anything.” Not a good idea. This is when it’s tough to be honest, but you have to admit when your feelings are hurt, and you have to be willing to say it, even if you think you shouldn’t.
Too often, loving partners want to avoid hurting each other. Most hiding is not really about being deceitful; it's more about not wanting to hurt the other person. Making careful agreements, however, will show you that in the long run, holding back is going to cause conflict. Sharing feelings in a caring manner will consistently lead to a more harmonious way of relating.

In this way, agreements can be forged on a foundation of honest, continuous communication. This begins with a willingness to say the difficult things. When this kind of courage happens over time it builds feelings of intimacy and consideration. With careful attention to the fluctuation of both your own and your partner’s true feelings, your agreements together will naturally evolve into more trust and freedom between you.

**Mistake Five: Assuming the Agreement is Finished**

This is another common mistake. Once the difficult things have been discussed and some sort of agreement has been reached, realize that this is only the beginning!

*Keep going and communicate more, not less*

There really is no end—no time after an agreement has been made can you do whatever you like without sensitivity to the other. It is a serious error to think that once you make an agreement you can just leave it at that. You have to keep talking, keep listening, keep refining, and keep learning from your mistakes. Once an agreement is made, agree to increase your communication and notice each other’s feelings.

It is not enough to say, “Honey, I am doing this or that, as
we discussed in the agreement,” before embarking on an adventure. Avoid making assumptions that things are okay.

Ask your partner, “How are you feeling about this?” And afterward, ask again, “How are you feeling now?”

Treat the fulfilling of agreements as sensitive journeys into new territory, even if you have had the agreement for years.

Talk to each other every time something within an agreement is put to the test. Do this all the time, not just the first time. Even though this may seem obvious or trivial, many forget to connect intimately and thank their partners for their trust and care.

When your agreements are surrounded by expressions of intimate gratitude and appreciation they will bring you closer together.

**Mistake Six: Ignoring Small Transgressions**

The biggest reason relationships fail is that small infractions are ignored. Sooner or later they create massive feelings of alienation and separation.

Far too often partners overlook early warning signs that something about an agreement isn’t right. Learn to see the small ways agreements are not working. Do not overreact emotionally over small transgressions, but do not ignore them either. Ignoring the minor things only leads to them getting bigger. Consider that each time a transgression is made in your relationship a negative imprint is planted. Every time you ignore your own error, or you overlook one of your partner’s unconscious
moments, that negative action or word is implanted like a dark seed. It grows and gains energy the longer it is hidden.

When the agreement is broken you can begin by asking questions such as, “Did I break this agreement because I didn’t agree to it?” Find out what it is within the agreement that isn’t working. You can also ask each other, “What are the ways we can be more connected and how can we spend more intimate time together?”

If frequent transgressions are made, something is off in the agreement. If they are chronically broken, either you don’t really want to make agreements in the first place, or something about the agreement is false. These are your options: 1) decide not to make any further agreements, 2) end the relationship, or 3) change the agreement. When one breaks an agreement the first thing to do is reexamine the agreement.

By the time a major agreement is broken—like cheating—you can be sure there has been a period of time where you have lost your intimate connection with your partner. When these agreements are broken, fights, tears, or silences are used like weapons. All agreements are off, chaos hits, and emotions rule. Commonly you’ll hear, “I can’t believe you actually did that,” or “Why didn’t you tell me about this before?”

Usually, the perpetrator (the one who did something outside the agreement) feels guilty for the transgression, and the victim (the one who did nothing wrong) feels justified in blaming, but this whole game is a miserable trap.

A powerful way to alter patterns of broken agreements in your relationship is to completely honor all your personal agreements. The more care you give regarding your own honesty,
truth, and integrity in all matters, the more grace you will have within your intimate sexual agreements. Honor the spirit and the letter of every single agreement you make, and the level of integrity with your intimate partner will increase.

*Make an agreement about what to do if an agreement is broken*

Many relationships could have ended sooner, and would have saved a lot of aggravation for both partners, if the small things had been handled immediately. Some relationships might not have ended with so much pain, or not ended at all, if the breaking of small agreements had been noticed and faced sooner.

If you know from the beginning what to do when agreements are broken, you can avoid unnecessary misfortune. You can simply say, “If one of us breaks an agreement, for whatever reason, we will admit it and talk about it as soon as we can.” Do not make the mistake of assuming that this will happen. Give each other a way to admit small mistakes and give each other a way to recommit in the event of an error.

If you say something unkind when you are leaving in the morning, only to later wish you hadn’t said it, bring it up later and apologize. Even if it was just because you were in a hurry, don’t let it slide. That small pebble in your shoe hurts if you leave it in there all day. Regardless of how small the infractions, make it a regular practice to come together and talk about what happened. Make it clear that perpetual breaking of agreements will lead to the end of the relationship.

Another important thing is to honor your word. If you agreed to make love on Tuesday night, but when Tuesday comes around you didn’t feel like it, this is a big deal. How long would
Sexual Agreements

you hold a job if you got into the habit of telling your boss that you are sorry but you just don’t feel like coming in to work. If you treat your sexual agreements with as much respect as you do an important business deal, you will plant a seed of integrity between you. If you make an agreement to make love, honor your word. If you really don’t feel like making love when you agreed to it, recommit to another time. Make only those agreements you are willing to keep.

A broken agreement can show you precisely what you need to change or refine in the original agreement. Seeing any broken agreement as an opportunity, while consciously agreeing to come together to talk over all transgressions, will carry you through the most challenging times in your relationships. Refusing to let things slide will pay off in the long run. Being tolerant by discussing mistakes or transgressions will lead to greater clarity of true needs and desires.

Looking back over the years, it has been the mistakes I made that helped me discover what kind of relationship I really wanted. I found that even though they were painful to go through, it was the errors and the transgressions—both mine and my partner’s—that helped me create the long lasting and truer agreements I now have in my intimate relationships.

Mistake Seven: Forgetting Agreements Between Self and Spirit

It’s important to recognize that until there is an agreement with self, any attempt at creating a lasting, harmonious agreement with another person is bound to be short-lived.

When two (or more) people get together with sound inten-
tions, what comes forth is powerful. The process begins with a commitment to your own self-discovery. This will allow you to better understand the desires and needs of your partner. As you clarify your agreements with self, you will attract more fulfilling relationships and create better agreements in every area of your personal life.

Before any negotiations occur, an agreement between your self and spirit is necessary. Personally, this has been the most profound lesson of all. The agreements I establish with Spirit, God, or whatever one calls a higher power is ultimately the only real agreement there is.

The first sexual agreement I made between myself and Spirit was the foundation of all my other agreements. In the beginning, I made a private agreement between Spirit and myself that I deserved pleasure. Yes, this is where it started. It was a very private internal “training.” It took me a long time to rewire my history, so my first agreement with Spirit was that during every orgasm, whether it was by myself or with somebody else, I was to remind myself that I deserved this moment of feeling good.

With this agreement of my own self-worth as groundwork, I began to gather strength around this central agreement.

*Ask yourself: “What do I need most as a woman or as a man now?”*

Asking questions and asking for what you want with clarity, patience, and allowance will lead to its manifestation. The more clarity you carry within yourself, the better agreements you will be able to make. Find a quiet place and ask yourself the following questions. (*If you do not currently have a partner, ask what you*
would like from a potential partner.) You may want to journal or write these things down and keep them in a private place.

**Creating an Agreement Between Self and Spirit**
Ask these questions whenever you need to bring greater harmony into your intimate relationships.

- What would bring me greater emotional peace in my life?
- What can I do to calm my emotions?
- What can I do to bring greater mental tranquility?
- What can I do to have mental clarity?
- What can I do to improve my physical health?
- What can I do to improve my physical environment?
- What would help me feel more hopeful?
- What can I do to increase my feelings of spiritual connection?
- What would bring greater sexual pleasure in my life?
- What can I do to increase my sexual enjoyment?

After completing these questions, sit quietly and meditate on the following question. Allow your thoughts to condense into a short, simple answer.
What do I most need to feel fulfilled as a man?

or

What do I most need to feel fulfilled as a woman?

This short answer can become a personal prayer, or a request from Spirit. Usually, it is something like: I need to feel whole and beautiful, I deserve pleasure, I need to feel love and I am lovable, or I am worthy.

This becomes the seed thought of your “Agreement with Self and Spirit.” This seed will fortify the intent of any subsequent agreements you may create with others.

**Practical Keys for Making Good Agreements**

*Lighten up*

If you are not careful, making loving agreements can feel like you are at a business meeting. Unfortunately, if it gets boring, you will somehow sabotage the process. To avoid turning the creation of agreements into a dreary business, agree to limit the amount of time you are going to spend doing this.

*Make time for a few brief meetings*

You will be surprised how well this works. State beforehand, “We are going to do this for one hour.” Be sure to stop talking at the end of the hour. If you do not finish in the time you agreed on begin where you left off next time. The best way to avoid going on and on, and round and round, is to lighten up and keep things simple and brief.

You might want to plan three or four brief times to get
together. At first discuss initial thoughts, feelings, fears, and possibilities. During the second meeting have further discussions and share what came up for you after the first session. Make choices about the areas you think are really important. See what needs further reflection. Notice the sensitive areas, but do your best not to dwell on them.

Create a trial period

Make sure that you have expressed your feelings as honestly as you can. If you are trying something new that represents a significant change from the way you have been relating—or the way you were brought up—give the agreement a trial period.

Say, “We need to talk about this again in a month after we have both had time to see what comes up.” This way, you have a built-in way to find out what is and what is not working. Creating a trial period is one of the best ways to alleviate fears about what might happen in the future. Agreeing to and following through with these meetings is a good way to practice honoring your word. Eventually, you won’t really need “meetings.” In the beginning it is a good idea to create focused time together. In this way, the whole process of making conscious agreements helps you generate trust between you. It is also an excellent way to begin a new relationship or to help heal a relationship that needs renewal and fresh ideas.

Create a special occasion

In addition to having shorter, more frequent meetings, make them more fun. My experience is that what we do not really like doing, or that is not somehow truly beneficial, will not be done for
long. If this process is only about speaking grievances, it is unlikely you will want to focus on your relationship agreements very often. It needs to be a pleasurable experience. If it brings you closer together and, most importantly, if your life gets noticeably better, then it will become a natural and enjoyable way of living.

A great place to have a “meeting” is next to a fire over a glass of wine. It is best to share all the nuances of your relationship in a cozy, comfortable, and beautiful surrounding where both of you feel the promise of new possibilities. Create a time you look forward to by sharing something you both love to do. You can also make agreements during a holiday, birthday, or a vacation.

At times when my partner and I felt our intimate connection slipping we spontaneously created a time of reflection and care for our relationship. Other times we planned a special day a month in advance. I have found that deliberately taking the time to express my deepest feelings of love, gratitude, and appreciation with my partner—as well as sore points—has paid off handsomely. When agreements are made in this way over a decent amount of time, the sensitive issues never get the chance to get that big. Tending to all the small matters that accumulate in any intimate relationship allows us to live in greater harmony and peace.

Before making specific agreements, ask each other the following questions:

You can use these questions as a starting place before beginning to make more specific sexual agreements. I suggest writing down your answers when alone and then reading your answers out loud to each other. After reading each answer out loud have a discussion about each one.
Sexual Agreements

Be prepared—these questions may bring up some rather lively, and intimate diversions!

There are two sets of questions, one for those who would like to share the answers with a partner, and one for those who will be answering these questions for themselves.

Questions to Begin Empowered Relationships
Partners:

What are the three best things about our relationship?
What are the three worst things?
What do you most enjoy about our sex life?
What do you least enjoy?
What do you love most about our home life?
What do you like least?
What do you like most about our social life?
What do you like least?
What is your favorite thing about my body?
What do you find least attractive about me?
What is the biggest area of stress in your life?
What can I do to help you that might make your life more fulfilling, or more relaxed?
What are your dreams, visions, or desires?
What gives your life meaning and purpose?
What are your three biggest priorities?
Common Mistakes and Resolutions

Singles:

What are the three best things about my life?
What are the three worst things?

What do I most enjoy about my sex life?
What do I least enjoy?

What do I love most about my home life?
What do I like least?

What do I like most about my social life?
What do I like least?

What do I like best about my body?
What do I like least?

What is the biggest area of stress in my life?

What can I do to make life more enjoyable and pleasurable for myself and for others around me?

What are my dreams, visions, or desires?

What gives my life meaning and purpose?

What are my three biggest priorities?

What qualities would I most desire in an intimate partner?

Completion:
If you are doing this together with a partner, thank him/her and then thank yourself. Once you have finished you may wish to do something special, but I’ll leave that up to you.
Chapter Two

Sexual Agreements Within Monogamous Relationships

I think deep down we all seek a beloved union. We keep asking, “Is this the one?” We want to know if we can bare our soul to this person. “Is this one going to run if I show how vulnerable I really am? Is this the one who is going to stay no matter what?”

Having that profound desire to be authentic, be loved, give fully, and devote ourselves to our soul’s growth is the underlying motivation that drives us to seek the safety and security of an enduring partnership. Finding someone with whom we can be exclusively sexual for the vast majority may be the best way to mature and spiritually grow.

However, being monogamous has its set of challenges. When speaking of sexual agreements, it may be that being monogamous is the most difficult kind of relationship to maintain. Who would agree to eat the same thing for dinner for the rest of her life? It’s a challenge to find a person you dearly love, and then also find them sexually exciting when you see them day in and day out.

For most, being monogamous provides the kind of safety needed to open sexually. For those who enjoy having one part-
ner, sex is so intensely intimate and private that the idea of sharing with more than one person seems absurd. If you want to explore sexual agreements within a monogamous relationship, it is important to carefully consider why. Is it your nature, or are you choosing this form of relationship because it provides you the best way to be intimate? Are you hiding out inside a relationship? Are you seeking to be taken care of, or are you ready to make a commitment that includes riding through both precarious and precious times together? Even if you choose a monogamous lifestyle, what are you going to do about other attractions? In order to consciously choose monogamy these questions and more must be answered in a genuine way.

If you have chosen to explore a monogamous relationship because it’s what you most desire and need, then making sound sexual agreements is essential. If you want to avoid the common pitfalls and the loss of energy that can happen by being with the same person, there is a way. Agreeing to be sexually exclusive, yet still enjoying freedom may sound impossible, but it is achievable. Finding the unlimited potential of sexual intimacy with one person is an amazing journey.

*Find your profound purpose in being together*

The monogamous relationships that work well carry this type of agreement—everything that has been said about trust, support, care, and honesty applies. However, there is something else. What manifests as an enduring, life-giving partnership is the sharing of a common life intention. This means sharing a profound purpose in being together—raising a family, creating a business, living a harmonious life, and pursuing healing and
Spiritual endeavors. These are all profound purposes. And for most people the structure of a monogamous relationship is what offers the best environment to make it through all the wild ups and downs that life brings.

Partners who stay together empowered and for a long time have learned to co-create agreements that carefully consider each person’s individual dreams and aspirations. All decisions and choices are made with those dreams and aspirations in mind.

Agreements that are mutually beneficial nourish each partner and allow the deepest gifts of both to flourish. They are not about trapping one another into staying faithful or roping each other into a tangle of heavy obligations. A good agreement is continually clarifying why you want to be together.

To stay with anyone, it is important to keep asking yourself why you want to be together. Most people assume they know. It seems obvious because there are children, a house, and career(s). All these things may be the fruits of your relationship. But if outer things are the reasons you are together, then monogamy will get stale and old—and the sex gets boring.

I know of couples married for 50 years who have never talked about why they are together. Taking this for granted or keeping it vague will lead to the dilution of your sexual energies. Monogamy becomes an unconscious habit based on accumulations of dependencies like financial and family obligations.

What makes monogamy powerful is staying keenly aware that anything can change at any moment. By staying present each day to why you are together, your choice resonates in the little things you do and say. It means sincerely thanking your partner, giving them hugs, and tender kisses, intimately listening, challenging
each other when you fall back into bad habits, and really appreciating all the small ways they make life better by being with you.

An empowering monogamous relationship that endures with vitality, heart, sexual passion, and mutual growth is not a random act of God. As with anything that goes well in life, patience and commitment are what make it work.

Living within sexual agreements that are fluid and alive, yet grounded in an awareness of the value of each partner, is a rare art worth learning. Being faithful and loyal, making a daily decision that “this is the one person I want to be with intimately” is a profound choice, but only when it’s chosen consciously. With this in mind, make only those agreements you are willing to live with every day.

**Common Questions**

*How do I begin talking to my partner about sex if we haven’t discussed it before?*

This is more common than you can imagine. I have known couples who suffer for decades, politely avoiding talking about the basic things they dislike about their sex lives. People who wouldn’t dream of not saying, “Honey, I don’t really like peas. I prefer carrots,” cannot bring themselves to say what they like or what they do not like sexually. They will endure years of unfulfilling, frustrating, or disappointing sex merely because they don’t know how to ask for what they want.

Much of this lack of communication exists because we are not used to talking about sex in our culture. Yes, “sexuality” as a topic is all over the place. However, talking about the nitty-gritty,
small things that happen before, during, and after sex seldom occur. Like, “Could you be gentler?” or “I like it just like this.”

The way to start talking about sex is to first give yourself permission to talk about it, and that it is okay. Plant this idea in your mind. “It’s good to let my partner know what I am feeling at the time it is happening.”

A common reason for keeping grievances and disappointments to oneself is the fear of hurting the partner’s feelings. In my experience, all sexual grudges held inside (even the small ones) will manifest into more serious situations such as divorce, a sexless marriage, mental abuse, or even physical abuse. Temporarily hurting someone’s feelings is minor compared to what happens when you hold disappointments inside for a long time.

How to talk with your partner about sex is a huge topic. If you simply share with kindness and sincerity, talking about sex becomes easier all the time. It may be a bit scary in the beginning, but once you start you will never understand why you haven’t been talking intimately and in detail about sex before. Remember, it’s a new thing and may take a little time getting used to. It’s a lot of fun—it even becomes a turn on—to ask for what you want. Go ahead, you are worth it.

*I’m in a monogamous relationship and have never made agreements about sex before. I want to initiate the discussion of a sexual agreement. How do I start?*

Proceed gradually and begin making agreements in areas that do not involve sex. Apply the practical keys for making good agreements to anything in your life—family, career, or any life decisions. Once you’ve made those agreements, you can move
toward making sexual agreements. If you are making other agreements and are still having trouble talking about sex, I suggest you lighten up. Perhaps you can watch a few comedies about sex. Rent the *Vagina Monologues* or *Sex and the City.* Bring sex into your daily life. Do not try to initiate talking about sex in a confrontational way. Make talking about sex not such a serious thing. This should make it a lot easier (and more fun) to initiate good sexual discussions with your partner.

What if my partner doesn’t want sex as much as I do? How do I make an agreement about that?

Beg (okay, kidding). I rarely meet a couple who wants exactly the same amount of sex at the same time—including myself. All my former attempts at agreeing to times and amounts of sex have failed. I believe the regulation of sexual frequency is impossible.

It’s far better to agree on the importance and significance of sex in your lives, then try to agree on having sex a certain number of times per week. Agreeing that sex is healthy, that it makes you feel closer, and that it helps you feel creative and alive is far more effective. Supporting positive feelings about sex will help you find your natural rhythms.

Negotiation should always exist between partners. Quit trying to eliminate the difference in how much you want sex. Instead, focus on changing your attitude about making love, and you will have more beautiful experiences when you do have sex. The secret is to take the pressure out of the situation. Lighten up. Look for what turns your partner on. Have patience. Let the body’s natural cycles occur and the love and sex you share will be extraordinary. It will be just the right amount.
How do I keep our sex life from being boring?

Just as the sun will not shine every day, your sexual passion is going to go through cloudy phases and cycles. If you feel bored, notice that you are in a lull. The main thing is to take responsibility. If your sex life seems dull, make a decision to do something different. Don't wait for your partner to do something different. Before things get boring, you be the one to do something different. Even the smallest gesture has the profound effect of bringing new life to your lovemaking.

Can I recreate the passion if it’s gone?

I'm sure you've heard the sad song, “The Thrill is Gone.” Just about everyone has felt that surge of passion at the beginning of a relationship—and then the slow fade that follows. Everyone thinks, “I hope this feeling will last forever, or I better enjoy it as long as I can, because the thrill is going to be gone eventually.” This is not the way it has to turn out. Sexual passion need not become dull and fade away. It can grow, change, deepen, and mature like fine wine. Sex can remain thrilling your whole life if you understand how to keep it alive.

This is a huge issue which is really about the fear of losing your life-force or sexual energy. If you really want to keep your sexual passion alive, you must cultivate the underlying idea that sex is natural and good. You must treat your sexual life as precious. You must consider sex as necessary for enjoying a healthy life. In order to maintain sexual passion it has to be important for both of you. A healthy relationship includes sex. Just as you can make a decision to improve your diet or increase your body's strength, you can also make a decision to increase your sexual health.
When you improve your attitudes and consider sex as important as everything else you do, you then have to start paying attention to the changes in your body. It is common for both men and women to experience changes in their sexuality as they get older. Most people want to cling to what they had before, when they were young. While it is helpful to have youthful thoughts about sex, it is also important to let go of any expectations of yourself and of your partner. Hankering for “how good it was” will make it harder for you to enjoy the sexual feelings you do have. If you are obsessed with the past, your mind interferes with your ability to feel love and sexual passion in the present. When you are focused in the moment, you can learn to notice small openings for sexual opportunities. Then you can have the courage to create those opportunities and make love more often. This is what keeps passion alive.

*What if I love my partner and I am attracted to someone else?*

This is where sexual agreements are really necessary. Keeping your commitment to being honest and having absolute integrity in all of your agreements is the only way to ensure a loving and enduring partnership. When making your agreements together, be honest about your attraction to others. Hiding it will diminish your passion. Acting indiscriminately on them will destroy your relationship.

It is common and natural to have other attractions. It is unrealistic to think that you will only find each other attractive for the rest of your lives. Deciding what to do about other attractions is a very personal and private agreement.

Understand and honor what your partner needs to feel

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secure in your relationship. You can make agreements about how to express attractions to others without interfering with your monogamous commitment.

*What if I suspect my partner is lying?*

I would suggest doing the agreement with your “Self and Spirit” first. Carefully consider where you are not being completely honest with your partner. The only way to ensure honesty with someone else is to be completely honest yourself. If you ask yourself about your own honesty (before checking in with all your friends and getting their opinions) before demanding “the truth” from your partner, you are going to find the real cause of any deceit—if there is any.

It may be difficult to hear, but if you suspect your partner is cheating or lying, have you considered what would cause him to have to sneak around? What is it about your way of relating that makes it difficult to say honest things? Why is it easier to lie than to tell the truth?

It’s not really one person’s fault when lies occur. It’s no use blaming or acting contrite and being sorry for lying and promising never to do it again. Lies happen between two people—if both are responsible. It’s much better to talk about what is needed and wanted. Find out what in your relationship might be causing your partner to go elsewhere. Observe carefully and listen compassionately to the real needs of your partner. Address those needs and there will no longer be a reason to lie or sneak around.
How can I tell my partner I don’t like something about their sexual approach without hurting his or her feelings?

The important thing to remember is that while we are making love we are extraordinarily open and sensitive. Everything said gets imprinted on the psyche and encoded into the body. In the midst of being so open and vulnerable, a casual word, a look, a sigh of disapproval cuts deep. I make it a point never to say anything unkind while making love. Politeness and kind words go a long way. Even when there is something I distinctly dislike, I will say what I do like kindly.

If you don’t like something, say so. Don’t hold it inside. Practice saying what you would like in a supportive way. For example, if a touch is too fast or too rough, say something like, “Please slow down,” or “Please be gentler.”

Say, “This is what I like,” and then demonstrate. If you do not like the way you are being kissed, practice kissing the way you like to be kissed. Say, “This is how I like to be kissed,” and then show him. Be prepared to do this over and over again until he gets it. Most of us have ingrained ways we do things sexually, and it takes patience to show and tell someone how you like it— not just once, but several times. Do not be insulted if he doesn’t get it right away. Remember, the logical sequential brain is not functioning very well at the height of sexual arousal. It’s easy to forget when we get excited. I know it’s frustrating to repeat things, but if you have patience and an open heart you will inspire your lover to give you pleasure. Most of the time your lover wants to please you—he or she just doesn’t know how. As I said before, if you are sincere, honest, and kind in asking for what you want, you won’t need to worry about hurt feelings.
What if my needs and my partner’s are different? How do I know whether I am honestly expressing my needs and desires or whether I am being selfish? What is the difference between freedom and just doing whatever I want?

Never forget that other people’s feelings matter. Disregarding other people’s feelings is not a sign of freedom; it’s a sign of ignorance. True, you cannot live your life doing what other people want you to do, but if your needs and desires override everything else and people often question your behavior, you are ego driven. Your own sexual needs and expectations are driving you to act in immature ways. Rationalized freedom is greed in disguise. You just want whatever you want, and you have little concern for others. When your actions are truly free they will create harmony around you. Other people may not agree. They may not like what you are doing, but they will not fight you. Freedom does not come from a cavalier determination to do as you please. Compassion for another’s feelings is wise and will lead to feelings of greater and deeper love. True freedom occurs within compassion for others. You will no longer have to prove you can have and do as you like.

Is there a good way to end a monogamous relationship?

It can be an empowering experience to end a relationship in a friendly way. You realize you want different things. You may love this person dearly and you may have done innumerable things together in hopes that your relationship would turn into an enduring partnership. However, the recognition and understanding that an endearing friendship is the best way you can have a relationship together is more satisfying. Although it can
Sexual Agreements

be painful, and must be considered deeply, parting well prepares you for your next partner. Ending a relationship well is as important as beginning one well. If you take the time to deeply understand the reasons for your separation, and assess what you have learned about your own strengths and weaknesses, your next relationship will be that much stronger.
Chapter Three

Opening Relationships

The following section will cover some guidelines and principles as well as common questions that might arise when choosing to open a relationship to include more than one partner.

Tolerance and greater acceptance for individual sexual preferences is becoming more widespread in our culture. Both men and women are exploring all sorts of alternative relationships. In these emerging partnerships it is not as clear as in the past about what is okay, and what is not okay to do sexually. In the stretching of conventional rules of conduct, some of these experiments are careless and do not work. Other people find that living with whomever they like in the precise manner they choose is a remarkable way to love freely. Living with greater freedom and openness comes with a unique challenge—establishing clear rules of engagement.

Though it may be exciting to experiment with several partners or to invite select friends into your intimate sex life, you will soon discover there is beauty in conventional wisdom too. Although outer forms of relationships may change, our inner feelings and sensitive places are not so quick to change. Cheating
is still cheating, and being truthful is still true. With so many new freedoms being explored, especially sexual freedom, it’s good to remember we are still quite fragile when it comes to sex.

If you are going to have multiple partners, creating carefully considered sexual agreements is absolutely necessary. Open relationships are not for everyone. It can be a grand sexual delusion or, if sound agreements are made with mature consideration, it can become a means to create a way of living uniquely suited to your nature. What matters is that you know what is best for you.

Deciding what is right for you at this time

It requires a high level of maturity to have multiple partners. Most people have a hard enough time being intimate with one person, let alone two or three. When you bring sex into the equation, things become that much more complex.

When choosing to open a relationship, the biggest pitfall is that partners are impatient. Usually, one is convinced they need freedom and want to explore being with someone new. Most of the time this doesn’t work. The main reason is that opening the relationship is used as a way to fix or avoid something that is not working in the first place. Another reason is that agreements and understandings about intentions and motivations are vague.

Whether you have a primary committed relationship you want to open, or you are seeing several people at once, the same principles and guidelines apply. I cannot say, “Here is the way to do this.” I will only point out some common pitfalls and suggest some ways one might navigate through this territory with a bit more grace.

It requires an enormous level of trust, a deep commitment
together, and profound intimacy to share sexual energy outside a primary partnership. It’s not something to undertake lightly. Being open and clear with regard to sexual issues is challenging in any relationship.

Be clear about intentions

When you are interested in being intimate with several people, you need to understand why. You have to ask yourself, “What am I really looking for?”

Until there is clarity about why you are seeking multiple sexual experiences, you and whomever you are with will always feel some insecurity. This is why, in order to succeed in having more sexual openness and freedom, you will need to build upon experiences of integrity, care, and support before venturing into unfamiliar territory. If security between you has eroded, then take the time to renew the heart space of your relationship.

The simple rule is build upon trust. By taking the time to understand your real needs and desires—and your partner’s—you will connect more deeply. In this way, you will have greater freedom. Freedom in relationships is a consequence of understanding, care, and sharing good experiences with each other. Freedom does not come from demanding it. Neither does love. If you are finding that your attempt to open your relationship feels like a demand or an expectation, or there is anything about it that does not feel right—more trust and intimacy are needed.

Check your motivations

Here is something I have learned about having several partners at once: Do not go outside the relationship out of lack. If
things are not good at home, don’t look for what is missing outside the relationship. Make things right at home first.

If a relationship is unstable, having multiple partners will only amplify those problems. Going outside the relationship to fill emotional or sexual needs will create jealousy and insecurities between you and your partner. Opening a relationship in order to fix a problem is going to fail.

Ask yourself, “Why do I really want to do this?” Check your motivations. If it’s because you want to have more sex, start by being honest about your sexual needs. Make new agreements with your primary partner to increase your passion and attraction for one another. If it is because you want some variety, be clear about what this will add to your primary relationship. If it is because you think your partner wants to open the relationship but you don’t, obviously this is going be a problem for you later.

Perhaps you are thinking, “If we had enough sex and variety, why would we want to open the relationship? If we had enough between us, why would we go looking for more?”

There is nothing inherently wrong with having a healthy libido, wanting more sex, or wanting variety—reasons someone would consider opening a relationship. When you are healthy it is natural to have a desire for sexual expression. It’s how you ask for what you want that matters.

It either comes from a mature request, or from a greedy, self-focused entitlement. If your way of communicating your sexual needs and desires is a demand, chances are that opening our relationship to include others is not going to work.

Maturely expressing your sexual needs and motivations is something learned over time. If they are not communicated hon-
the attempt to open your relationship is going to injure rather than increase your love for one another.

*When is a good time to open a relationship?*

The only time I have seen open relationships work (meaning both partners have been very happy for a long time) was when the relationship had a strong foundation of deep love, reliability, and clear trust. Both understood the other’s true motivations and intentions.

Most importantly, there was a strong emotional bonding, and sexual sharing already in place. They were not going outside to find something that was missing—they were adding energy to an already good thing. In this way, opening your relationship to include another can strengthen the affection between you and your lover. Having multiple partners is not a sign of being more advanced sexually. Having an open relationship in itself is not a sign of greater maturity. The only thing to do is to ask yourself what is right for you at this time in your life.

**What Makes an Open Relationship Work?**

*For those in a committed relationship with a primary partner*

The Golden Rule: Your primary partner comes first in all things. It’s one thing to have an agreement about this. It’s another thing to act on this daily, hourly, and moment-to-moment. The primary partner is the one with whom you are making the agreement, and is the first person with whom you want to share everything. What you have between you is more important than all other attractions. The agreements you have
with each other are honored first, no matter what. If you both know this, you will be able to use anything that happens along the way to create a stronger bond between you.

Here is an example of an agreement that can strengthen a primary partnership: *If for any reason my partner does not want me to be with someone (or vice versa), I will not proceed.*

This one agreement has led to the deepest levels of intimacy and trust I have ever known. Why? It teaches you that there are times when the perceptions of your partner may be clearer than your own. At times your partner’s view is going to be far more objective than yours. He may be able to sense subtle things about another person that you may be too emotionally involved to see.

Here is how it can work. If your partner does not feel good about you being with a particular person for any reason, you *simply let it go.* You may ask why, but do not argue. Even if it is because your partner is in a sensitive place about your own connection (maybe you haven’t made love in a long time), you listen, and then make sure that you increase your intimacy together.

Over the years, I have found having this understanding firmly in place is one of the ways to actively build greater trust in one another’s ability to perceive clearly. Although it may rarely happen that either of you objects to a chosen person, knowing that your primary partner comes first in this way creates a stronger bond between you.

*For those seeing several partners*

Seeing multiple partners can be one of the most profound ways to learn about relationships and intimacy. We don’t even
have a word for it in our language. Being sexually intimate with several partners is not really dating. One word to describe it might be “free-dancing.” It means you are intentionally exploring sexual intimacy with several people. You are learning about your preferences, about how you can become a better lover. By being with different people you are both finding out what you like sexually, and what different men or women enjoy. Being with only one person cannot give you these perspectives.

You are also seeking to understand how being with different partners brings out new dimensions of your persona. You see a variety of partners to intentionally experience new sides of yourself. It might be that being with one person brings out a shy, quiet side of you and being with someone else brings out your wilder side. Most people only experience a more expansive sense of themselves sexually as teenagers. When you are young, it is more accepted to explore being with different people. It is quite another experience to intentionally explore different sexual aspects of yourself as an adult. If free-dancing is done with the intent to discover more about yourself and others, it can be as profound an experience as any other form of relationship.

As with a primary partnership, everything hinges on your intent and integrity. Are you clear, open, and honest exploring in this way, or are you aimlessly wandering about trying to have more sex?

Although in the beginning, having several sexual partners may seem exhilarating, it comes with its own set of challenges. Because new connections are being made at the same time, it can be hard to develop real intimacy with any one person. Your energy can become dispersed. You can “get away with” a lot of things
because you are only showing bits of yourself here and there. Free-dancing can either become a way to avoid intimacy, or it can be a period of exploring new things about yourself and others.

The time I spent being a free-dancer was one of the most beautiful periods of my life. On a bad day it seemed like everyone around me was having all kinds of intimate sexual experiences I was missing. Gradually, I learned that the way I felt about being single totally affected the kind of intimate experiences I would have. If I felt lonely I would attract clingy people and situations. If I felt free, and I sincerely sought genuine moments of intimacy with any person I met, I would attract amazing people and experiences into my life.

The free-dancing relationships I have seen work are those that come from sharing with the utmost integrity in all things—from safe sex to making clear agreements about sensitive feelings. Being extremely honest about your intentions and highly aware of the integrity of every single action is what makes free-dancing a meaningful, uplifting experience.

A successful free-dancer meets partners with an attitude of abundance. Considering each partner special, they learn to appreciate the different gifts each has to offer. They avoid connecting with anyone out of lack or loneliness by refusing to indulge in surface gossip or say any negative things about the intimacies they have enjoyed. They are vigilant to ensure that their own health and happiness are well cared for. In other words, they immerse themselves with purpose by doing what they love.

They increase their attractiveness by becoming devoted to sharing their deepest gifts with the world. Then they give their energy with sincere, intimate connection with whom they choose.
Here is an example of an agreement that can strengthen a free-dancing relationship. *I will carefully consider the unique reflections of my sexual partners. I will explore those differences by sharing what I see and what I feel that is unique about each partner. I will seek to intensify my intimacy by revealing my vulnerabilities and sharing my strengths.*

In this way, having multiple partners can move away from being a series of casual sex partners into deeply intimate unions filled with gratitude and appreciation.

**Q&A About Opening Relationships**

*Can I still be loyal and have more than one partner?*

Yes, but you have to make a decision to avoid all covert behavior. Covert behavior sounds something like, “Because I am not getting what I want, I am going to get it secretly.” Or, “If I said what I really wanted, I would never get it, so I am going to get it secretly anyway.” Behaving this way is highly destructive and will definitely erode the quality of your intimate relations.

In much of our society, when one partner has a desire to see someone other than his or her partner sexually, it is hidden as a guilty, shameful secret. Affairs are usually considered seedy and crass, done sneakily just to satisfy “excess” needs. Being honest about wanting to have sex outside the partnership is an outrageous proposition for most people. Illicit affairs are more commonly accepted than truthful expressions of attraction.
Should my partner be able to be sexual with whomever they want?

Open relationships do not work well with reckless abandon. Having attractions is natural, and one can learn to share them in a way that will bring you closer. Saying you are attracted to someone does not mean you have to do anything about it. That depends on your agreements. Suppressing these feelings of attraction, however, leads to covert thoughts and actions.

Sharing what you find desirable in others can be done in a way that increases your attraction for one another. This is a very sensitive subject and has to be done carefully. Having clear agreements about what is okay and what is not okay to talk about is essential. Here are some guidelines I have found useful.

First, make sure your lover knows you find him or her attractive. Speak of how gorgeous you find someone else only with the intention of increasing your intimacy. You can do this by making sure your lover knows he or she is “The One.” If there is any hint of doubt, or any feeling that you really prefer this other person, then the flirtation is going to be divisive. Give your partner genuine assurance that you find him or her desirable. Make sure he or she benefits from what turns you on by giving to him or her with renewed intimacy. Share the energy you have gained from having an attraction to someone else with your partner. In this way you can demonstrate your loyalty and increase your attraction together.

What if my partner is jealous of the way I look at others?

If even the slightest flirting provokes arguments then there is something about the way you are doing it that is off. You have to learn to flirt in a way that is more inclusive of your partner.
What if I want to have another partner, but my partner doesn’t want me to?

You are probably rushing things and making demands of your partner that the relationship is not ready for. Start with much smaller issues. Begin with easygoing flirting that does not provoke jealousy. Make it fun by going to a coffee shop and talking about how good looking the other people are, then go home and make passionate love with your partner. This is what is meant by sharing the energy you have gained and letting them benefit from what turns you on.

In my experience, if one person wants multiple partners and the other does not, it is not going to work unless there is a high degree of intimacy, and deep love. If only one of you has a desire to explore multiple partners, it might mean you want different things from the relationship at this time. I do not recommend open relationships if one wants to and the other does not. If this is the case, wait. Develop greater intimacy and friendship together.

Before opening any relationship it is wise to have a history of loyal and fun sexual experiences together. All too often partners want to go from 0 to 90 miles per hour. I recommend starting out by sharing energy in very playful, non-confrontational ways for a long time. The simple rule is to build on a history of worthy actions. Do this and you will have greater freedom.

Why is my partner so insecure?

Chances are you are not providing much security. Most insecurity about opening relationships stems from questions like, “Am I still Number One in your life? or “Are you going to find someone you’d rather be with more than me?”
If you want to create an enduring relationship together this is not the kind of question you answer one time with a beloved. It is the kind of question that needs to be answered daily—particularly when you are going to be with another. If your partner is insecure, you need to be extra sensitive, honest, and caring. If you have generated insecurity between you, even the smallest attraction can cause jealousy. Something about the way you have expressed or acted on an attraction in the past was threatening. Your partner did not feel connected with you.

When you are exploring being with someone else, remember that your partner is probably wondering, “Have things changed? Is that person better than I am?” Reassuring your partner of your true feelings is what can make an exploration with another an incredibly beautiful adventure. If your partner feels threatened, or feels they are going to lose you, then it’s not a wonderful adventure for them. Understand your partner’s feelings, sincerely seek to feel what they are feeling and you will include compassion in all your agreements.

Is the timing right?

Again, opening a relationship will not fix problems. If a relationship is unstable, having multiple partners is likely to amplify what is unresolved between you. It is wise to consider carefully whether adding new ingredients is a good idea for you at this time. Chances are great that whatever is not working between the two of you is going to become more apparent. Before going outside the relationship carefully consider your own sexual needs and listen to those of your partner. If you are clear about your intentions and honest about what other sexual partners
might give you, you will know if the time is right. Address all your partner’s fears, doubts and insecurities, as well as your own. Talk about whatever you can conceive of happening if you opened your relationship. Make clear agreements. Talk about all this and you will know whether the timing is right or not.

What if I feel that the intimacy between my partner and I is weakened by having an open relationship?

This can happen. If your being with others dilutes rather than strengthens your intimacy together it usually means that your agreements are too broad or vague. A random free-for-all is not a good way to manage having an open relationship. Open relationships rarely work if there aren’t any clear agreements about timing, who you will be with, when you will be with someone, and how you share after you have been intimate with someone else. If your intimacy is suffering, and you are feeling less close, this is a signal that something is off and needs your attention right away.

What if my partner typically says, “Sure go ahead,” but there is always a consequence?

Ask yourselves whether you are ready to open your relationship, and take the time to discover what is not working.

What do I do if I have done all this agreement stuff and I still get jealous?

Carefully consider what you may be afraid of losing. Express all your insecurities, doubts, and fears. Further consider what or who is making you jealous. What do they seem to have or offer
Sexual Agreements

that you think you lack? Is it really true that you lack what you are jealous of, or is it that you are just different?

What about sexual diseases?
   It is essential to become knowledgeable, and make explicit agreements, about safe sex.

What if something starts out casually but develops into more?
   Be honest all the time and there will be no surprises. Make a decision to refrain from all covert behavior. I have learned that when I focus on giving my absolute love, care, and passion, my fears about my partner finding someone better completely dissolve. If you can cultivate the attitude that “it’s really good at home” then it is highly unlikely you will find anything better outside.

What if something happens spontaneously?
   It’s best to have an agreement before this happens. For some it is just too much to find out that their partner has been with someone else. For others, that’s one of the most beautiful parts—being free to be spontaneously sexual with someone. Make clear agreements about what is right for you.

What do I do if I want to be sexual with someone else’s partner?
   Obviously, what we are talking about here is open communication. This is not going to work where people are not already somewhat open to sharing multiple partners. I don’t recommend the following for all situations. This can work only where open relationships are already being considered on some level.
Every situation is different, so here are some basic principles that can make the whole experience of being with someone else's partner a beautiful experience. Communicating with rigorous honesty and respect is the key.

For example, you know two people who have an open relationship. You are attracted to the man and would like to be sexual with him, and he would like to be sexual with you.

First you need to discuss the nature of his relationship with his partner. You can ask him what he and his partner like to do about other attractions. And then ask, “Is she okay with me talking with her?” If it is okay, call and arrange to meet her. It should be just the two of you. That way you can both express and feel each other’s intentions.

Let her know the nature of your attraction and that you have no intention of interfering with her primary relationship. If there are other considerations such as children, family members, telephone calling, or anything else, seek to honor her feelings and needs completely. Ask her to share her concerns. If she is willing to do this, be sure to listen for all the things that might not be spoken. Then give her a gift, thanking her for being open enough to talk, and for considering sharing the one she loves. Afterwards, give the couple time to think about everything that you discussed and agree to talk again if necessary. Always keep in mind that every single thing you do or say, and even what you think matters.

My experiences in doing this with several women have been remarkable. Much to my surprise, I became dear friends with each woman. It is an extremely intimate thing to share one's intimate partner. Maintaining my commitment to never be a
“wedge” in my words, thoughts, or actions was essential. The fact that I did not allow myself to separate them as partners is what initiated a friendship between me and these women.

I made it very clear to each one that I would stop seeing her partner immediately if asked, or if I sensed things were getting out of hand. I was not going to have a secret affair with her partner. In most cases, these women were extremely grateful for what I taught their lovers, because it brought greater beauty into their love life.

I’m not trying be noble because not everything always went perfectly. I am, however, attempting to show the kind of intention and meticulous attention to feelings it takes to make open relationships work. The key to opening a relationship in beauty is a commitment to share honest, heart-to-heart communication with all the people involved.

How do I share with my partner when I've been with someone else?

This is more important than you can imagine. When you forget to share well, no matter how clear your agreement is, or how well you have spoken your intentions and motivations, the experience is going to be sour. Think of it this way—you could be the one staying home while your partner is out having a good time. She returns feeling great but you have been by yourself and aren’t feeling so good. She says “Wow that was fantastic! Thanks, Honey!”

These are incredibly sensitive situations. There are many different emotions occurring, so be careful. Yes, be honest, but this doesn’t mean blurtting everything out right away. Develop your sense of timing. Find out where your partner is emotionally. It’s
most likely she wants to connect with you before hearing of your adventure. Connect with intimacy first, however long this takes, and then share.

You can have agreements about how you tell each other of your adventures. Sometimes a partner feels that it’s fine that you see another, but he or she doesn’t want to hear the specific details about it. Others are very sensitive whenever you are with someone else, and are not sure how they are going to feel, so let them ask you before you say anything about your experience. Still others are going to enjoy sharing the details of your sexual experiences to increase their passion.

Decide what is right for you. Make an agreement about how you would like to share about your time being with others. It is fine to admit that you are sensitive, and it is even okay to say that you are jealous. What matters is that you share honestly at the appropriate time with an awareness of your partner’s feelings.

When an open relationship is working well, returning home to tell your lover or listening to their adventure becomes a deep joy. It can be an incredible pleasure to listen to what turns your lover on. To hear the details of their arousal can be utterly stimulating. If all your agreements are in place, and you have established the necessary trust and care, then opening your relationship becomes an amazing possibility for passion between you.

Anticipating their return, you can’t wait to hear what happened. Sometimes the listening turns into a prelude for intense sexual love. You actually use what your partner shares with you about being with someone else to increase your desire for each other. Hearing about their pleasure turns you on.
Upon returning from your own experience, you see how happy your lover feels about the joy you had in being with another. You feel even more loyal and more love for your beloved. The more joy they experience, the happier you become. Sharing each other's joy in this way is an extraordinary expression of profound love.
Chapter Four

Keeping and Maintaining Sexual Agreements

Building trust

Ultimately, all good agreements are built on foundations of trust. But how do you know whom to trust or when to trust someone?

Most of us, when beginning the process of making conscious agreements, come to the table with a history of insensitive things we’ve said or done—and a host of things we have consented to mindfully or not. There is often a hesitancy, and a lack of trust. Perhaps the biggest fear we have about making agreements is that either we don’t trust ourselves to keep them, or that our partner won’t be able to.

Since trusting someone is based on what they tend to do and say, it’s helpful to use an agreement over a trial-and-error period while trust is being built between you.

Misplaced trust

If you lack trust in yourself or your partner from the start, consider where and how you are misplacing your trust. If trust is misplaced it might be you who is misplacing it. If you have a
tendency to find yourself around people who are saying one thing but doing another, or if you find yourself having expectations about what people should do, or if you keep trusting people who are not honoring agreements with you, then you are misplacing your trust. You are making assumptions about other people’s motives or behavior. The root of misplaced trust is thinking that you know what someone else should do.

The simple solution is to drop your judgments and your expectations about the way you think things should be. Sooner or later one realizes that a huge amount of energy is lost trying to control other people’s behaviors or predict outcomes. Here are some things I’ve come to trust while learning to make agreements over the years.

I trust that people are likely to act in their own self-interest. I trust that they are as human as I am. I also trust that there are conditions that I do not always know, see, or understand as to why people do not keep their agreements. So, if I have a hesitation about making an agreement, or if I do not trust someone, it is best for me to consider my own stuff and quit trying to make an agreement for the time being and recognize that the conditions are not right.

Instead of wanting to trust someone, or hoping things will get better, ask yourself, “Am I being completely trustworthy myself?” Be as honest as you can. Sooner or later your own trustworthiness, integrity, and honesty will rub off on the people you spend time with.
Suspending disbelief
Along with placing trust where it belongs comes the practice of suspending disbelief in someone. Often, it is our belief that a person is going to do what they have always done in the past that exacerbates the problem. Many agreements are made with the assumption that it is not going to work, or that the other person is going to act in a certain way. Believing an outcome tends to manifest that outcome.

If someone is an alcoholic or a thief, you don’t ignore all the times they have lied or stolen. You simply trust that there is always the possibility of change, no matter how the situation appears from your perspective. Rather than wishing something was a certain way, it is much more effective to suspend disbelief that things could change. This way, rather than being sure of the way things are going to turn out, you can be in the neutral realm of unlimited possibilities. Things can change.

Three keys to navigating through the territory with a bit more grace: Be mindful of the following to keep your agreement fresh and alive.

Change is inevitable
The minute you make an agreement, the conditions surrounding the agreement have already changed. You cannot predict future conditions, and you can count on the fact that conditions and feelings will be different as soon as you make an agreement.

There will always be grey zones
At the time an agreement is made, for example, you feel okay about your partner dating someone “outside your circle of friends.” You agree that you can date others, just not people you
both know. But then your partner meets someone who isn’t exactly in your circle, who later becomes friends with someone in your circle and then, well, now it’s a question. What is our circle of friends? You get the idea. What to do? Keep communicating.

There are no guarantees

Long ago I thought making agreements would reduce my insecurity and make me feel safer. I realized, however, that making sexual agreements from this position is useless. Life is insecure and that is its beauty. An agreement if used as a way to obtain a guarantee that things will be a certain way will generate constant irritation and conflict. While agreements do create safety, guarantees are only temporary promises. As you know in life—there are no guarantees.

Relationships as a Spiritual Practice

One of my teachers was on a nine-year spiritual pilgrimage called Bowing for Peace. This is a Buddhist practice in which after every ninth step he would bow fully to the ground and pray for peace. One day as he was passing through a small town, he stopped for a glass of water at a local restaurant where the owner was preparing for the evening crowd. “So you’re the man who is out there bowing? You think that’s tough? You should try being married for 30 years. Now that’s an accomplishment.”

The Buddhist went off and thought about this for a while. He realized the man was correct. Bowing for peace was a process he could do by himself, but living in peace and harmony with a real, flesh-and-blood woman—now that was a spiritual accomplishment.
Statistics show that most car accidents happen within 25 miles of home. Something similar happens with the people we are closest to. We relax our communication and we get lazy. We will often say or do things to an intimate partner we wouldn’t dream of saying or doing to a stranger. While we often reserve our “best” for our loved ones, unfortunately we dole out our worst qualities as well.

As with any spiritual endeavor, though it may be rigorous and seem difficult in the beginning, with practice greater awareness and greater compassion occur. The real reward that comes from making ever more conscious, caring agreements is enjoying the happiness of our lovers. What pleasure is greater than to see those you love experiencing bliss?

It’s important to have patience with this, because we were taught that agreements are about telling each other what we can and cannot do. We were not included in making the rules we live by, and we were not taught to create the kind of lives that include enjoying our lovers’ happiness and freedom. Most of us have inherited agreements that were attempts to limit, regulate, and guard what we think belongs to us. We have very little experience with being generous, tolerant, or wise with regard to each other’s feelings and needs—especially when it comes to sex.

Most agreements are efforts to make something turn out the way you want it to. They are attempts to possess someone, maintain the status quo, avoid discomfort, and lessen the shock of the unknown. The desire for some kind of guarantee that “we will be together forever” is actually the ego’s way of expressing its infantile, self-centered feelings of entitlement. Especially in the sexual
arena, deep down one feels entitled to affection, love, and sex. The ego tries to protect itself by seeking to obtain a guarantee in hopes of getting what it wants. Making agreements from this position is nothing more than an attempt to get from people what you think they owe you.

Disagreements and irritations may not disappear as relationships mature, but with practice they will fade more quickly. They may come out in strong gusts, like passing storms bringing new energy into the relationship. Most importantly, when you continue communicating with intimate awareness, you start getting turned on by the freedom and trust that is growing between you. Considerable care and sensitivity is constantly present. Small hurts, anger, or jealousies are expressed with considerable care and sensitivity.

Eventually, blame and criticism disappear. You realize that it is no longer acceptable to do or say thoughtless things. It becomes clear that casually disrespecting, inadvertently releasing pent-up anger, and holding resentments are harmful to you and your partner. You start to live with the ever-present realization that every single thing you say or do, and even think, matters.

Making conscious agreements is actually a way of living within the precarious situation called life. Life does not always provide the ego with what it thinks it needs in order to survive. When you let go of trying to control people or situations, there is no longer a need to control things. You start having glimpses of reality. Your agreements become more kind, compassionate, and more understanding of everyone’s needs—not just your own. You begin to accept what is occurring rather than trying to cleverly figure it all out. In reality, agreements are only temporary
illusions, for ultimately we cannot predict what is going to happen in the next split second.

It may take a lifetime of tuning into the fluctuations of our sexual feelings to come to a place of harmony and peace in our relationships. What better way to learn than plunging into the everyday ups and downs that happen when we dare to connect intimately with another?

*Wise agreements*

As a spiritual practice within our relationships, wise agreements are made with heart and understanding. They will generate more love, more abundance, more freedom, and more joy. Ultimately, all the talking and agreement making subsides. Eventually you develop a natural way of continually sharing. What starts off as an awkward and endless clarification of details gradually shifts. Rather than discussing obligations and feeling bound by conditions, something new emerges. You start enjoying communicating and appreciating having someone to sift through the subtle nuances of everything that comes up in the process. It no longer feels boring or tedious. The details and the small daily victories, and even the mistakes become fascinating.

Remember that neither you nor your partner is perfect. When you accept this, there will be less and less holding on and less and less holding back. There is no longer a need to keep anything secret. If there are private matters, then it is understood that whatever needs to be spoken will be, when the time is right.

When we mature sexually our needs and desires mellow. As our bodies change, our sexual passions are tempered by our loving care. It is far wiser to keep a small fire burning, slowly
feeding it with gentle words and many small, kind actions. This may be the most important spiritual practice of all.

Making conscious agreements is really a process of self-discovery. There will be beautiful days and days of doubt, days when you feel free, turned on and full of passion, and days when you question everything. So why not relax, and enjoy the ride?

**Sexual Agreements and Major Transitions**

Major transitions in our intimate relationships are often the crossroads of our life that mark the beginning of a new direction. Ranging from the ending of sexual relations to the death of a loved one—any significant shift in our intimate partnerships can rock us to the core. There is no question that the turbulence can rouse our deepest insecurities, yet inside the chaos lies a jewel of concentrated energy—if we can see it.

These in-between times of not yet knowing where we are going nor what we want can be the start of either the best of times or the worst of times. When we reach the apex of doubt and frustration, when we feel totally empty, lost, and alone, these feelings will at some point naturally turn into something else. This decent of energy, though it appears uncertain and weak, is actually the signal of its opposite approaching—a creative wave of energy. A space opens in the darkness and suddenly we notice possibilities we could not see before. As a thunderstorm leaves clear fresh air in its wake, the upheavals in our intimate relationships generate waves of opportunity that carry the promise of improving our lives considerably.

It is a most advantageous time then to reflect about the kind
of sexual agreements you might wish to have. Using disappointments as a springboard, consider what is missing in your intimate sexual life. What would you like to find out more about? What would bring greater creativity and freedom into your relationships? What will you do differently as a lover to make sure positive change ensues?

With sincere reflection we can take advantage of the creative surges of energy that follow major transitions. Using the momentum we can experience a thorough letting go of situations, attitudes, or ways of thinking that do not serve us. We can more easily drop the illusions and incorrect assumptions we have been upholding. We may, for example, realize how we have played the role of the victim or the rescuer in relationships, becoming aware of how we have habitually complained about our situation or distracted ourselves by trying to fix and save others.

One single mother I knew had a son who was so violent she feared for the safety of her family. For years she was tormented by his outbursts of cruelty and constant aggression. Her intimate life consisted of attracting men who attempted to rescue her from her son. When the boy was suddenly taken away by state authorities, she directed her fury at the government and thus became the victim of both her son and the officials. Shortly after this crisis, she began to see the futility of her struggle against the state and turned the situation to her advantage. While her son was confined and strictly disciplined, he calmed down a great deal and they eventually became much closer. No longer being a victim in need of a rescuer, an entirely different type of man entered her life.

If we use these transitional periods to see and let go of
entrenched roles and attachments, we can make room for new ways of relating to take root. To gather the necessary energy and courage it takes to catch a wave of creative energy, it helps to concentrate on calming emotions and then listening for and seeing opportunities hidden within the chaos of change. During these times it is important to carefully choose influences and friendships supporting the new direction you wish to consider.

**Moving Through the Waves**

Unfortunately, we do not always catch the wave and sometimes miss the boat entirely. Drastic changes in our intimate relationships are probably the most difficult challenges we will face in life. Most of the time, during the storm everything is spinning and nothing is clear. In chaos we grasp for straws and rarely sail into the next situation with ease or grace. Our thoughts toss and turn, flipping from fond thoughts to repulsion. Our minds pick over frustrations, regrets, and disappointments. We blame, assign guilt, and often allow flashes of anger to spread through our heads like wildfires. We rarely welcome significant change in our intimate relationships calmly.

Caught in this state we normally pull back and shun expressing intimate feelings or sexual playfulness until we become so incompatible we have to do something dramatic to remedy the situation. Regrettably, many couples make necessary changes only after years of suffering until they finally have to let go. Although break ups or endings may appear abrupt, in most cases, they are not sudden—they result from ongoing irritations, petty arguments, and possessiveness that turn into a numbness
in the body, a shut-down of sexual feelings, and a depression of the spirit. Like water spilling out of a leaking glass, finally there is nothing left. If this type of repression persists, the lack of touch and sexual love becomes such a powerful force it can eventually compel us to risk making the changes we resist the most. It is often the gusts of clarity that come in the midst of crisis that strip away our tendency to stifle and ignore the expression of our deepest needs. Sometimes this is what it takes to jolt us into realizing what really matters.

**Becoming Single**

There is no need to follow such a dreary course in relationships. No matter how impossible, or stagnant things may seem, there is always a way of turning seeming loss into an opening for greater happiness. The key is clearing away emotional clutter and letting go of resistance to change. If caught in a wave of repression find the seed of discontent and try to ask for what you need in non-demanding and non-critical ways.

Of course ending a relationship is not the only option. Sometimes the harder thing and the wiser thing is to make every effort to resolve differences without parting ways. One couple in their 50’s who had been practically living together after separate divorces were enjoying the fun and romance of a new relationship. As they began to feel the decline of their sexual feelings, the fighting started, and they nearly decided to end it all. They realized, however, that they enjoyed each other’s company immensely and loved being sexual but saw that the amount of time they were spending together was exhausting them both. Rather than split-
ting apart, they agreed to see each other once a week—for sex and pleasurable time together. Ultimately, deciding to stay or go depends on whether you feel your spirit has a place to grow or not.

Becoming single at the midpoint of your life, whether it’s because you have chosen to leave a partnership or because of circumstance, is a tremendous challenge no matter what the reason or what the age. One minute we feel liberated from old constraints; the next minute we are afraid of never being able to find an intimate partner again. Everything from daily routines, to finances, to sexual relations has to be reconstructed. Many of the single women and men I have met, clearly don’t want to be in the same kind of relationships they have wrestled themselves away from, but they don’t want to be sexless either. In fact, most have a great desire and real interest in becoming sexual again—and to create new rules of the game.

**New Operating Systems**

In earlier years, our sexual agreements were much simpler. When we were younger, our sexual life consisted mainly of seeking out people we were attracted to, figuring out how to spend time together, and finding ways to have as much sex as possible. In those relationships, it was usually easier to move, change jobs, or whatever else was needed if we really wanted to continue a sexual relationship. Our lives were not yet filled with commitments, children, and all the responsibilities of adulthood.

As we mature, although desires for sex and intimacy may be even stronger than before, we have much more to think about when making sexual agreements. Often we have been outside the
dating scene for many years and have given little thought regarding how much we have changed sexually since we were younger. The good news is that there are a lot of people in the same situation. A growing number of both men and women who have had several key relationships, or who are ending long lasting marriages are entering into a completely different phase of their sexual lives. In hopes of creating something better they are looking for more sexually compatible situations.

**Sexual Passion**

For people beginning this new phase of life, one thing becomes crystal clear. A relationship with little or no sexual passion isn’t worth the trouble. The desire for sexual passion is not an immature nattering that goes away when we get older. Single or not, we all have passion inside and we want to find a way to share it. Sexual passion and intensity, or the hope of enjoying some, is often what urges us beyond past failures, pulls us through major changes, and inspires us to try again. Though we may know it comes and goes, no one wants to live without it.

As the interest in creating a healthy lifestyle increases so does the desire to enjoy a pleasurable sex life. Many single women and men who are able to secure their lives financially and emotionally are seeking forms of relationships different from the conventional models they may have preferred during their 20’s or 30’s. Whatever the form of relationship, instead of blindly hoping things will somehow magically last or that a new person will fit the bill, why not enter into new situations with a more clear understanding of your need for sexual passion and intensity?
Sexual Limbo

After letting go of a relationship, or making it through a major change, it is easy to slip into a perplexing situation where sexual passion is not so easily found. Wanting sexual intimacy, but not wanting the difficulties that come with it, not wanting to settle for unhappiness, and not wanting to indulge in random acts of sex either, we enter a phase of sexual limbo where our sexual feelings are virtually unexpressed. There are notions of what is not wanted but little idea of how to go about obtaining what is wanted. There may be a desire to explore sex, but we don’t know how to go about having any. There is a gap, a confusion that can last for years.

This stalemate of unexpressed energy can continue until certain personal questions are resolved and we determine to enjoy a healthy sex life in a way that works for us.

If you are seeking multiple sexual partners, what form of relationship is going to work for you now? What are you going to do to make sure you can explore safely? Consider carefully how you feel about having sexual experiences outside of a primary partnership. If single, where and how are you going to have sexual experiences? Where will you find people? If you have had sex with someone should you continue? How do you avoid the pitfalls and drama that so often come with opening into new types of intimate situations?

When we begin exploring alternative sexual options we certainly do not want to repeat the mistakes of our past. Of course we do not want to recreate the sexual frustrations we left behind, nor find ourselves with a different person but in the same situation all over again. We want to create something different. The question is what do we want now?
I do not believe that the solution to creating sustained sexual intimacy and passion is the same for everybody. For some, sexual passion is best achieved in an exclusive partnership or marriage, for others having several partners or enjoying sex with someone of the same sex is what brings waves of fresh and intimate feelings. Freedom to choose what works for you, tolerance for others, and time to discover your true nature is what makes certain intimate intensity and sexual pleasure occur again and again.

One couple I worked with were having trouble connecting sexually. They both said they wanted to be together and shared a mutual desire to have a committed relationship. Every time they got together sexually, however, they would end up arguing and feel agitated with each other. Their limbo, rather than being a vague in-between place, happened to be a standoff where old lovers, old emotions, and new jealousies sprang up like angry weeds in their bed. Having recently left other relationships, neither wanted to get trapped again into confining situations. They wanted to be more free, and so agreed each could have other sexual partners. They tried having an open relationship for several months, but things only got worse. When they came to see me they looked worn out and were ready to ditch the relationship altogether.

I suggested an option of agreeing to an extended period of exclusivity. After long-lasting fights or estrangement, it is often helpful to eliminate any distractions if you want to rebuild trust for one another. One of the best ways to end periods of sexual limbo and restore sexual passion is to refocus your sexual energy completely. After a year of choosing to be sexually exclusive this couple’s attraction and affection for each other naturally skyrocketed. Now, having established a foundation of security and
trust together, they are ready to more carefully explore the possibilities of having outside partners. I reminded them there is always the option of agreeing to be sexually exclusive any time either one of them wants to.

Another man I met experienced another kind of sexual limbo. For about 10 years he wanted to focus on his art rather than being with women or even dating. When I met him he was ready to end his non-sexual single life. He lost the 40 pounds he had picked up and his career was taking off as well. He looked fantastic but was so used to his life he wasn’t sure how to connect again with women. In this man’s case, all he needed was a reminder of how beautiful it is to be sexually loved and to give sexually. He had forgotten how much he missed and needed sexual love. Now, being more mature and confident about himself as a man, he is much slower and more careful about what he chooses to explore. Dating several women for the first time in his life, he is learning to use his sensitivity to discover what kind of sexual relationship he now wishes to create.

**Exploring Sexual Options**

The beauty of our culture is that, in most places at the moment, we *can* explore alternative kinds of relationships without being hurt or outcast from society. To be sure, we must use discretion and some people may be offended by our choices. There may even be serious judgment or places of severe restriction—yet it is undeniable that we live in a period of expanding tolerance for trying new sexual options. Although some attempts of living non-conventional lifestyles may lead to misfortune or folly, and
Keeping and Maintaining Sexual Agreements

some sexual explorations may prove harmful, the present environment of relative tolerance may also allow for true investigations where more individual choices and more sexual openness can be shared by many. Whatever options you are considering, the more clearly you establish your sexual agreements and commit to them, the more successfully you can discover what works for you.

**Casual Sex**

One of the most common options to explore is having casual sexual encounters with friends, acquaintances, or multiple partners. At first it seems like heaven—all the pleasures of sex without the difficulties of long-term relationships. It sure beats being alone, and it is better than being stuck in a non-sexual or irritating relationship. But if you notice, casual sex quickly becomes difficult to maintain. It is not only the juggling of time schedules, but also keeping one partner from knowing about another that especially becomes tiresome. Even if you are honest with everyone involved, casual sex becomes exhausting if you misunderstand its place or purpose in your sexual life.

Sex in which there is little or no emotional commitment, in which the main purpose is to have a pleasurable experience with someone you like can provide valuable fresh energy within a relationship. As a periodic, or occasional option, casual sex can be an empowering source of renewal in which either partner can enjoy an open, fun sexual encounter. While casual sex is frequently the best and easiest option available, without clear agreements its usefulness can quickly
deteriorate. Beyond the obvious difficulty of trying to figure out the difference between a friendship and a lover’s relationship, casual sex partners can soon become uninteresting. Once we have enjoyed the sex there isn’t enough juice, or enough in common to continue beyond the sexual realm. The attraction that was present in the pursuit disappears soon after the sexual act is conceived.

The secret to keeping casual sexual experiences as harmonious and empowering aspects within our sexual life is to be clear about what each encounter is, what it is for, and to be clear about *what it is not*. There is little question having sex with someone new can at times be more passionate and exciting than being with our more familiar partner. This is of course what so many are afraid of, and why it can be difficult to benefit from having casual sex partners.

When a casual partner is mistaken for something other than casual it can cause imbalances in any relationship. It is easy to get overwhelmed by the pleasure that comes from great sex. If we get caught thinking that strong sexual attraction is more important than anything else and try to take something casual into a full-blown relationship, we most likely will run into trouble. Forgetting that sex is but one aspect of intimacy (which often occurs after long suppression) we allow ourselves to be overridden by desire. In this way, the sexual flood stemming from a casual encounter can develop into an addictive obsession that dominates every aspect of our life. Signs of this imbalance are when we become lethargic and bored with anything other than our sexual obsession—turning what was beautiful into something destructive.

If you recognize casual sex by its temporary nature, under-
standing that there is likely to be a strong thrill from being with someone new, you will not need to turn an apple into an orange. In other words, the sweet intimate companionship that an enduring love relationship provides, a casual encounter cannot. Whereas waves of sexual passion will ebb and flow like seasons during the span of an enduring partnership, the whole beauty of a casual encounter is its brevity. If enjoyed as such, casual sex can remain highly beneficial experiences within a committed relationship.

**Sexual Agreements with Outside Partners**

I know that many consider having other sexual partners while married a crime of adultery even today. Unfortunately, for many, the only option available to help resolve sexual dissatisfaction is to have a covert affair. Lying to a lover, while not an official crime, is certainly a poor option. If lies are what is needed in order to maintain a relationship, whether you believe they are bad or good, right or wrong, in our culture, covert affairs are more common than honest agreements to have other lovers.

I know a great number of married couples who have included other sexual partners into their relationships successfully. While their marriages are not trouble free and certainly go through sexual ups and downs, like any relationship they have lasted in some cases for 25 years. For a growing number of couples, choosing to explore openly with partners outside of a committed relationship is proving to be a viable option to restoring sexual intensity and passion as well as providing a means to enjoy enduring trust and security.

One woman I know asked her husband of ten years if he
would be okay with her having sex with a man she met at a workshop. They both agreed that this should be kept private and felt that their children need not know about their decision. They spent much time talking about what she found so attractive about this man and why she thought she could handle being sexually intimate without breaking apart their marriage. Admitting the places they felt vulnerable or insecure prompted even greater feelings of love and trust. Their open dialogue created a feeling of closeness and security. They felt even more sure about the commitment and beauty of their marriage. Interestingly, each privately told me they enjoyed some of the most passionate sex of their entire marriage during these discussions.

They made several agreements limiting the scope and duration of proposed meetings and were specific about what type of sexual activity was okay and what was not. This helped them both understand how to keep feelings for this man from going too far. Since she was the type of woman who only enjoyed being sexually intimate with a man she knew and felt comfortable with, she wanted her husband to meet him before they got together. They all agreed she would not sleep with this man nor spend the night in his bed, as they understood this would lead to a much more intimate connection. After several times of being together sexually, each time sharing exactly what happened, and always connecting sexually with her husband afterwards, she has continued to enjoy several intimate lovers over the years.

The most successful explorations happen when partners are quite disciplined about their sexual agreements. Primary partners notice and address when their sexual energy is off or weakening between them, and they do not let their own sexual
intensity erode to the point where they cannot connect with each other or have to depend on outside stimulation. They also include ways to make certain any sexual exploration is comfortable, respectful, and safe.

**Celibacy**

Sometimes after having several unsatisfying or unsuccessful casual sex partners, the best option seems to be having no sex at all. Celibacy, or refraining from sex altogether, is a common choice many make during an impasse or sexual lull in a relationship—or after ending one. In most cases, however, celibacy is not chosen as an option—it’s a default position that is taken as the result of confusion, rejection, or simply being unable to find a suitable partner.

Celibacy can be beneficial for a period of time. If used to get clear agreements with yourself about how you can best use and share sexual energy, it is an excellent option. When chosen as a period of reflection, short phases of celibacy can truly be a celebration of self. You can take the time to grow and have fun in other ways, still enjoy sexual energy with your self, and take pleasure in intimate friendships. The secret is knowing what length of time is right for you. Notice whether you are gaining energy and feel vibrant and alive or feel tired and restless.

Unless chosen with a specific intention, long extended years of celibacy can lead to a dulling of vitality and health for both men and women. Single or not, getting fixated with work, preoccupied with worry and obligations or keeping excessively busy to avoid sexual intimacy will eventually deplete your life force
energy. Many people I meet who are in a phase of celibacy would like to be sexual again but are not sure how to re-enter the field of play. Choosing to be celibate seems to be the best option for a while but as with everything done in extreme it will eventually turn into its opposite.

**Sexual Indulgence**

Sometimes after extensive periods of no sex, the urges just get too strong. Being celibate for too long, some sex is needed. Since it doesn’t look like Mr. or Mrs. right is anywhere nearby—some indulgence is chosen. A sexual indulgence is like a food binge—splurging in all the things we couldn’t do while in a relationship. It usually doesn’t last because most often sexual indulgence, when carried out in extreme and excessive ways, with no agreements and little thought of consequences, leads to feelings of emptiness and boredom. Signs of imbalance are emotional outbursts and people getting upset or harmed in the aftermath of careless actions. When the temporary excitement of freedom from old constraints wears off, and after trying a few titillating new sexual things, one begins to miss the joys of exactly what was so boring—the simple quiet joys of intimacy.

The nature of an indulgence is that it is novel and hot. While new or unusual sexual explorations can be beneficial, relying on extremes, something extremely daring or extremely novel will lead to a loss of sexual vitality and health. When thoughtless sexual indulgence becomes the major outlet for sexual release, no matter how tactfully put, or how cleverly arranged, the encounters will be destructive.
One of the things that makes a sexual act harmful is the guilt that is mixed into the experience. With a sexual indulgence we feel bad about ourselves, bad about the other person, and bad about the sexual act itself. There is a feeling of using, feeling powerful over or feeling used by the other. Whether it is conscious or not, there is an intent to force, use, or manipulate the other for one’s own gain. These types of sexual indulgences are often confused for being “free” when in fact they are damaging and dangerous to our spirit.

The opposite of a sexual indulgence is a sexual exploration that is clear, open, and full of care for self and the other. When a sexual exploration is healthy it is accompanied by a natural wave of kindness and friendliness. A sexual exploration thus gives us ample energy. When our intent is to give and share in a mutually beneficial way we will experience a gain of serenity and joy. In a healthy sexual exploration of something new, it becomes pleasurable to return to our more usual sexual patterns of intimacy. Most importantly, we have renewed respect and trust for our partner as well as a gust of passion that comes from the freedom of trying something new. In fact, when a sexual exploration is free from indulgence you will feel good about yourself, good about your partner, and good about the sexual act.

**Transformational Sex**

Wherever we may be within the spectrum of exploring sexual options, at some point, we realize prolonged sexual denial or extreme self-indulgence doesn’t work. Often, this is when we become open to considering another possibility: that our sexual
energy can be used as a healing and transformational agent in our lives. Much of the current interest in Tantra comes from a desire to avoid the misuse of sexual energy and explore healing aspects of sex. One meaning of the word transform is to change something completely for the better. Any sexual act can be transformational when we use the force of this powerful energy to share with tenderness. It is easy to see how giving sexually with our passion and intense focus can bring us into a state of bliss. These moments are healing on so many levels. With the intent to share intimacy for our mutual health and vitality, freely choosing to give our sexual passion, our sex can become a means to change us from feeling complacent to profoundly content.

Viewed in this way, Transformational sex can range from enjoying a cozy evening with our lover, to self-pleasuring with images of the moon and stars, to an unusual encounter with a stranger. It all depends on the intention you carry in your mind. The following are examples of how any sexual encounter can be experienced as healing or transformational.

(Once upon a time) two women who were lovers decided that it would be healing for each to have sex with men from time to time. Realizing they could both benefit, they made agreements to include having sexual encounters in various ways. They openly shared of their experiences with different men and made a commitment to bring the passion of their enjoyment with men into their own intimate relationship. The powerful invigorating surges of energy provided them with renewed passion and care for each other. Careful agreements ensured that their relationship continued to build a bond of trust and security between them and they enjoyed their companionship in this way for many years.
Transformational sex can also include having sex with someone for a limited time, or for a specific healing purpose. A 37-year-old woman I met and had never had intercourse with a man. Although she was pretty and led a spiritual life, her health was seriously deteriorating. She decided that having a good sexual experience might improve her health, but because she had waited so long, she was afraid of dating and did not know where to begin. She also held strong beliefs about being sexual only with someone she loves. Asking some of the women in her community for help, one offered her husband as a partner. They talked, made agreements and decided it would be healing to have a few sexual experiences together with the clear understanding that it would not turn into a relationship, or be carried further than a few times. This gentle, open introduction to sex with a trusted man was what she needed to begin her sexual exploration in a loving way. After a short time, this woman gained her confidence and began dating and exploring on her own.

Another woman wanted to explore having sex with a man she did not know. The woman had actually fantasized for years about having sex with someone other than her husband but was far too shy to ever tell him of her fantasy. One day she gathered the courage to tell him of her desire, and much to her surprise he said that not only would it be okay but he had actually thought about it for years too. In fact, he said, the thought of it turned him on so much he would be more than happy to help arrange a safe meeting with a man he picked out for her. One night they went to a dance club together and he watched her dancing with other men she found attractive. After one particularly attractive man had asked her to dance, as they agreed, her
husband approached this man and asked if he would enjoy being sexual with his wife. They brought him back to their apartment, made specific agreements as to the duration and limits of what was okay, and then he watched his wife perform oral sex with this man. After thanking him he left, and the couple, I was told, made exquisite passionate love together.

**Enjoying Guilt Free Sex**

In order for new sexual options to become viable those first agreements with your self and spirit must be carefully considered first. With your internal core agreements—such as “I love being sexual,” “I deserve sexual pleasure,” or “My orgasms are healing”—set in place, creating new options becomes a profound exploration.

What stops most of us from enjoying more frequent passionate sexual experiences is not knowing how to create a viable way to have sex in a guilt-free way. How can we enjoy sex without feeling used, wrong, or empty? We can explore all kinds of options, make agreements with friends, try alternate forms of relationships, date people on the internet—all of these new options can be interesting—but if we feel guilty underneath, when it comes time to be sexually intimate we will feel confused and lose energy.

The solution is to enter any sexually intimate situation with a clear intention and a guilt-free mind. Be open and honest about what you want. If you are seeking passionate expression simply because you enjoy and desire sex, then be honest about it. If you are clear about what this encounter is, and accept what it can give you without any guilt, if you show respect for yourself
and your partner you can benefit in a loving way. Decide what is right for you. If you are clear from the beginning there will be no need to feel guilty in the end. If you are confused in the beginning, in the end you will feel guilty in sex.

It is important to understand the difference between our body’s need for sex, and the need we have for intimacy in a relationship. When we are healthy our body has surges of sexual feeling. Totally ignoring the body’s needs is as harmful as carelessly indulging in every sexual urge. Women and men need both emotional intimacy and physical sex. There is no need to feel guilty about either one. At times our needs for intimacy and sex may converge, but at times we can satisfy them separately. It is beautiful when they are met at the same time with the same person, but this may not always be the case. Be clear about the differences and do not mistake one thing for another. What matters is understanding that both our sexual needs and intimate needs are equally important yet different. Sexual passion is as important as sensuous intimacy. They may not always be equally expressed or satisfied and may be met together or separately in different ways.

**Keys to Exploring Sexual Options**

Whenever exploring any new options regarding sex, it is likely that early programming and old operating systems around sex are going to rear up. Guilt and shame about our natural desires unfortunately has been around for some time and it is not always easy to discern or express our true needs. It is easy to be pulled back by familiar beliefs before new choices have had a chance to be inte-
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grated. So here are, hopefully, some useful keys to use while exploring.

• Don’t rush.

• Take your time to consider things carefully.

• Make agreements about where you are going and where you are not going.

• If you are unsure, wait until you can gain more clarity.

• Avoid extremes.

• If you are unhappy, exhausted, or your everyday life is out of balance, you are rushing or moving into extremes. If you are in a hurry, slow down.

• Be extremely honest about what you want.

• Try to articulate what you need, even if it is not yet apparent how you can obtain it.

• Communicate all your sexual concerns.

• Never do anything unsafe.

• Don’t hesitate to adjust agreements if something feels off.
Afterword

I hope that people who read this book will discover deep within themselves a security and importance for seeking a sexually enduring and endearing relationship. Something within us likes a variety of new sexual experiences. We do not love just one thing, eat one type of food, or feel stimulated sexually by one person alone. We can’t help being attracted to a man we meet in a coffee shop or a woman at the grocery store. Who and what turns us on is unpredictable and should not be tightly controlled.

It is as if we are simultaneously wired to seek the safety of an intimate relationship while at the same time we also want the freedom to enjoy whatever we find attractive. Unless we learn to consciously create both the security we need as well as the room to explore the variety of what arouses us, our agreements are destined to confine us rather than become platforms for lift off into deeper experiences of life. Good sexual agreements ensure that we will have the comforts of intimacy and the freedom to explore our natural sexual attractions as well.

At one point we knew how to do this easily. We knew how to keep things interesting without cumbersome and lengthy negotiations. Think about how energizing it was to date and discover sexual feelings when we were teenagers. We were intensely curious to know and find out who or what would turn us on. Passion was not something we had to create or look for. At some point in our lives we had a natural desire to experience sexual energy coursing through our bodies. Once we started getting into relationships, however, we attempted to hold onto and control what we had discovered. Our eagerness to know lessened and we began to wonder why our relationships lost their mystery and
why passionate sexual lovemaking became so rare. Unwittingly, we started making unconscious agreements that limited rather than strengthened our sexual curiosity. We unknowingly reverted to dull and familiar patterns without even realizing we were walking into a common trap.

Normally when we enter into a sexual relationship something interesting happens. It feels so good to have sex that we automatically bundle our needs, desires, hopes, and attention together, and attach them to the chosen one hoping he or she will stay around. If we can attach these feelings onto someone we are happy; if we can't find someone to latch onto, we are miserable. Although it is the common and expected thing to do—and our morality insists it's the right thing to do—the idea and the fantasy is to find the one. Unfortunately, however, when our sexual energy is directed exclusively into a single person an inevitable decline sets in. No matter how wonderful the circumstance and no matter how much “in love” we think we are, an invisible shield descends over us like a cloud we never see.

Inside this narrow tunnel, we are buffered and comforted by conventions, which tell us that if we are a good person, we should be fulfilled, satisfied, and happy by directing our love and, in particular, our sexual love exclusively into this one person. We are convinced that if we create agreements of exclusivity we can stay safe and be happy forever. Then, when the intensity of sexual interest wears off and we settle into the daily efforts of a relationship we do not even notice we have somehow shut ourselves off from the natural attractions of life.

In the beginning of a sexual relationship we feel so appreciated inside this lovely bubble we do not want it to burst. We want to care for and be cared for by someone. With seemingly good
intentions, we quickly become attached, possessive, and start trying to control each other in order to make things last. Briefly, when the sexual energy is at its peak, “wow” we are really “in love.” We make all sorts of promises and our agreements are mostly wishful thinking about how we can keep all this going. It is nearly impossible not to seek and succumb to such feelings. Our body is full of the desire to have orgasms, to laugh, to let go. Nothing else really seems to much matter and everything seems possible. It is unquestionably a wonderful state. On the one hand, it is our natural state, and if we do not feel some of this inner aliveness something seems to be missing. At the same time it is a phantom state, an impossible illusion because we do not yet know how to sustain such openness in a relaxed and enduring way.

The desire to create new, more mutually beneficial agreements in many ways is an attempt to avoid repeating the same patterns that have failed to bring much vibrancy, health, or sexual joy in the past. Unless we alter this kind of unconsciousness within our agreements and allow our natural curiosities to flourish we will remain caught chasing after our slow ruin. We are doomed to keep repeating and clinging to sexual agreements we are convinced will make us happy, but so rarely do.

While our sexual patterns and beliefs are not always easy to change, we are coming to feel that the conventional agreements we grew up with do not allow for our basic sexual needs to be satisfied. Uninterested in random inconsiderate acts and no longer willing to live for many years feeling sexually dissatisfied, many of us are pioneering new forms of relationships and creating more fulfilling sexual agreements. Unquestionably, something new and more balanced is emerging. Our lifestyles may
require entirely different kinds of sexual agreements than the ones we grew up with. Like salmon swimming upstream, even those going against the current, forming alternative sexual relationships are part of the natural design too. So no matter what you may think of this work, of your sexuality, and relationships, the most important issue is your understanding of yourself, sexually and emotionally. To this end I pray this book has offered you something of value and insight.
About the Author

Amara is an inspirational, loving, and gracefully feminine mystical teacher. Trained in the Taoist White Tigress tradition of feminine spiritual practices—she is also apprenticed to the Sweet Medicine Sundance Path of Turtle Island and is a Quodoushka spiritual sexuality instructor. She is the founder of Jade Moon Sacred Sexuality Training Programs and has led workshops internationally since 1989.

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