

think I've been doing okay in the bedroom, but who knows? Maybe my vigorous spit-polish technique isn't cutting it... I guess it's time to upgrade my skills at a tantra class, run by The Australian School of Tantra (australianschooloftantra.com.au).

The school is run by husband and wife team Kerry and Diane Riley, who offer private sessions and workshops across Australia. Diane has even written a book, *Sexy and Sacred* (Loveworks, \$37.45), devoted to bringing out the sensual goddess in you. As I flick through it I realise that another reason I'm hurling myself into this roadtest is because it sounds so excruciating and like such a massive effort that I'm intrigued as to whether I can do it.

"Tantra can bring harmony into all aspects of ourselves: body, heart and soul," Diane tells me. "Women bring their partners to be more emotionally connected, or to learn more ways to feel love."

My private session will be run by Adriana, a yoga teacher who's been trained by Kerry and Diane in the art of sacred sexuality. Adriana is also Brazilian, so she's already got a headstart on being effortlessly sensual! She greets me at the door of her apartment and sits me down to talk about what I want to get out of the session. Immediately I feel comfortable with her, not weird at all.

Adriana changes into a sarong and hands me a kaftan. The room is decked out with candles, incense, cushions; the sound of didgeridoos warbles away and the heat is up high. Let the tantra lessons begin...

Can deep breathing, channelling energy and visualising balls of light turn you into a sex goddess? Jenny Knight road tests a tantra class to find out...

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exercise one Adriana and I sit cross-legged on a mat while she walks me through

some pelvic floor exercises, which involve squeezing and releasing the pubococcygeal, or PC, muscles (the ones you use to stop and start the flow of urine). Many people assume these exercises are only for women after childbirth, but Diane teaches that it's beneficial for both men and women. As well as strengthening the grip of your 'yoni', making it more pleasurable for the man's 'lingam', they also increase blood flow to the region and stimulate your sexual organs.

As we focus on our breathing – similarly to yoga, but through the mouth rather than nose – Adriana suggests moving my hand up my body to help me visualise pulsing the good feeling right up to my heart. We loosen up further by standing opposite one another and undulating our hips in loose figures of eight. The 'kundalini' sexual and spiritual energy is said to be stored in the pelvic bowl – the hips and the pelvis. According to *Sexy and Sacred*, it's even a good exercise to do before an intimidating business meeting, to tap into your feminine energy.

Afterwards, we sit on cushions and take turns musing on "what touches my heart", while smiling at each other. I know what you're thinking – tighten that kaftan and run! – but by now I'm so comfortable with Adriana and her good vibes that it's intimate without being awkward.

exercise two

Sitting side by side, we place our right hands onto our own yonis, with our left hands over our hearts. Adriana arches her back in and out of the yoga cat pose, breathing deeply and clenching her pelvic floor.

I'm supposed to be visualising a golden sphere of light but, thanks to years of oppressive male doctrine, I'm only able to picture a massive penis. I'm feeling relaxed and aroused though, so something's working.

If my boyfriend was here, Adriana says, I should sit astride his lap while doing this, and sweep my hand down my body then up his, transferring the energy from my heart to my yoni, to his lingam and up to his heart.

does it work?

As I get dressed after my session, I'm feeling really good and I'm already making plans to return. There's definitely something about taking the time to acknowledge the sensations that you're feeling. Usually, from the moment I wake up in the morning, my computer is switched on and any sense of mindfulness disappears.

The next time I see my boyfriend I'm too coy to go the whole hog and coax him into a kaftan for a discussion about what touches our hearts, but I do slow the pace of sex right down, concentrate on my breathing, and touch him more gently.

While we're making love, I visualise light flowing between us in the way Adriana has described. "It's not airy-fairy stuff," she'd explained in our lesson. "Visualising increases a sensation by focusing on it mentally."

While the strokes that I've learned are definitely appreciated by my fella (but by no means am I ready to put him through an internal ejaculation at this point), what's more meaningful for me is that I feel like we're sharing this experience on a more intimate level. We're making love, not just having sex. □

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exercise three You can use a tantra lesson to be coached in oral sex or erotic

massage and I opt for the latter. Diane teaches, "[Erotic massage] is not so much about teasing, but about building more and more sensual pleasure through the body so that when an orgasmic experience happens, waves of energy vibrate throughout it."

Adriana produces a candle that's a pretty lifelike lingam. She lies on the floor and holds it above her groin, demonstrating a variety of ways to stroke it. The idea is to keep bringing the man to the brink of orgasm then pulling back. With practice, by massaging a specific part of the perineum, you can give him an internal ejaculation that will fill him with energy and revitalise him. "It's better than him turning over and going to sleep," Adriana laughs.

the mantra of tantra