



THE TANTRA FESTIVAL SURVIVAL GUIDE

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THE TANTRA FESTIVAL SURVIVAL GUIDE

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WHAT IS A TANTRA FESTIVAL?



Tantra festivals are a rising new phenomenon around the world. They are gatherings led by more than one tantra teacher, so that participants get to dip in and out of different styles of teaching. As well as the basic workshops, the festivals have morning classes such as yoga and meditation,

and many evening activities such as dance and music concerts.

They tend to be intimate events: larger than a typical workshop but smaller than a music festival. Often they are between 100 and 200 people.

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What makes a festival different from a workshop?

- A wide range of teachers from different lineages.
- Teachers work together to create something new that they may not offer when teaching alone.
- The fact that there are many participants creates a strong energy field for transformation and experience.
- The music events in the evenings give a more free flowing experience outside of the actual workshops.

Many teachers love to teach at festivals just because the energy field is so strong. When you bring a large number of people together with shared intention, then miracles can happen! The space-holding of having a large number of teachers also creates a unique experience.

WHICH FESTIVAL?

There are now so many Tantra Festivals all around the globe that you have a wide range to choose from. Of course, there may be a particular location that calls you, or certain teachers that you want to work with.

However, the festivals vary from place to place, many having their own special signature flavour. Here is a guideline to a few of the popular festivals:

Delhi: This festival is based in India, the home and source of Tantra. So there is something very special about this event. It is based in an Osho retreat center, and although in Delhi it is an eco resort and is beautiful nature far from the city.

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There is a nice blend of tantra, meditation and music/arts. Often one of the world's greatest dancers or singers will come and give authentic tantric music or dance. Plus the visits from the Baul Mystics...ecstatic mystics who bring tantra through their very high energy music. A festival not to be missed. Usually quite intimate, at about 100-150 people.

Ibiza: Like the island, this is one of the juiciest festivals on the scene. Ibiza is known for clubs and parties and hedonism, and this Tantra festival brings the consciousness to the mix. This festival carries the expansive vibes of Ibiza, together with the beauty of this stunning island. Also has a great range of musicians and performers, so you get the nightlife after a day of workshops.

Sweden (Angsbacka): One of the most popular Tantra festivals, this one has been growing and evolving over the past 5 years. Based in a stunning community surrounded by forests and near a pristine lake, this festival is earthy and vibrant. It attracts people from all over the world on a life-changing journey. This festival can get big, but intimacy is maintained with the sharing circles.

Estonia: somehow a leading country in Tantra in Europe! This small country in the north east of Europe has an astounding number of tantric events! The festival takes advantage of the beauty and nature. A great range of teachers, offering many events. As the people are so heart-felt, this festival also has a very loving feel to it.

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UK (Leela): One of the first Tantra Festival! Oho Leela generally don't call their festivals "Tantra Festivals" any more, but have a range of names such as conscious sexuality. Perhaps this shift in name reflects a shift in focus. The festival takes place in a living community, mostly of the Osho Humaniversity school. Therefore, there is a focus unpinning up to life, living life to the full, experimenting, exploring and connecting. Lots of great dance parties too.

USA: a new-comer on the scene, The California Tantra Festival is into its second year. It started with a bang, as the first event was evacuated from Harbin Hot Springs during forest fires. However, the event continued in a forest campsite, proving the strength of the spirit of Tantra! This festival brings the fruits of the European Tantra Festival scene to the USA, blended with a post-Burning Man vibe. This event is bound to keep expanding into the future. Watch this space!

WHAT TO BRING?

It's always good to go well-prepared to a festival. Even if this is your first, this survival guide list will help you arrive like a seasoned-festival-goer!

1. **Two sarongs.** You may not have thought about this, as usually sarongs are for a day at the beach. But sarongs are every festival-goer's must-have item! Used to cover mattresses in massage sessions, to wear in some rituals and hey, you may even want to hang one over your bunk bed to get a little more privacy!!! If you bring a sarong or two, you won't regret it! (Bring two because one usually gets covered in coconut oil...)
2. **Coconut oil.** The tantrika's essential. Not only a health food product, coconut oil is one of the most popular massage oils. It is safe enough to apply to any body part and edible enough to lick off later.

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- 3. Yoga mat.** Some festivals are fully equipped and others are a bit more basic. Check the website first for details. But either way its often good to have your own yoga mat. Some festies will want you to bring your mat to workshops, and at others you may want a mat for meditating in your room or lying in the sun.
- 4. Costumes and special clothes.** Most festivals have a party somewhere along the way. You may want to bring something that makes you feel super sexy or deliciously divine. Some festivals also request white clothes for one event...others go more into playful sexy. Best to have a few options with you to cover all possibilities!
- 5. Protection.** Many festivals provide such a range of experience that sex itself is not even so vital! (Not to mention that many festivals have dorms and very little space for privacy). However, always good to be prepared for all possibilities, so bring your favorite choice of protection and get yourself fully tested before you come so that if you couple up with someone you can have "that conversation".
- 6. Mouthwash/ breath-freshener** (preferably some herbal variety from a health food store). This is really only for smokers, but if you know you suffer from morning mouth now and again...come prepared! There can be a lot of close breathing in Tantra, and it is really unpleasant if there is an odour problem. Avoid rejection by having sweet breath to offer.
- 7. Nice Underwear.** There can be a lot of massage opportunities, and if you hadn't thought about it you may regret not bringing your favorite underwear!
- 8. Glamp it up!** If you are coming to a camping festival, then it's probably wise not to bring a one-man tent with a single sleeping bag, as that leaves no possibility for cuddles or company. There are Tantra Fest Veterans who bring bell tents with double beds, candle-lit chandeliers and sheepskin rugs. Seriously. Don't get left behind.

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Social cards. Festivals are not the place for handing out your regular business card, but possibly consider bringing a social card so you can stay in contact with all these people you have cuddled with, spooned, and sat in yab-yum with!

WHAT NOT TO BRING

1. You can leave **your mobile phone** at home! OK well that's never going to happen. But at least come prepared to turn it off and stash it away in the bottom of your bag. These events are confidential and usually have only an official photographer...leaving you free to connect on a much deeper level.
2. **Massage oil with artificial ingredients** in it or strong aromatherapy oils. Tantriks favor natural oil. Even some natural essential oils, such as tea tree and peppermint are best avoided as they can irritate the sensitive body parts. So a plain and simple, organic oil is best. Check the website as some locations specify massage cream only because they do not want liquid oils spilling. Coconut oil is hard unless the location is tropical, but if it is a hot country you may want to seek out a special solid massage cream.
3. **Artificial deodorants and perfumes.** In Tantra, the senses become a lot more awakened. Many tantrics find heavy chemical perfumes to be offensive! It is recommended you check out your local health food store for some natural alternatives.
4. **Alcohol and Drugs** can also be left behind! In Tantra there is so much natural energy flowing that you can feel ecstatic without the ecstasy! If you feel nervous connecting intimately and are used to using a substance to help that, just bring your nervousness and vulnerability with you. This is your chance to heal that and open up to what has scared you in the past!

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5. Leave 'em behind! Tantra is alive and fresh in every moment. Even if you have been to a thousand festivals before, leave your expectations behind and come ready to receive the new!

SETTING INTENTIONS

Though there is a whole team of people creating this festival, ultimately this is your experience. It can be worth taking some time before the event to feel inside yourself and see what is being stirred. And then try to feel what is calling you.

Unlike many other spiritual paths, Tantra works *with* desire and *with* energy. Therefore you can use the energy that is bubbling within you as part of your own transformation. Combined with the workshops, meditations and group energy field...you have a potent cauldron for change! So why not use it with conscious intent?

“Intention is everything”

Shamanic Saying

How can you find your intention?

- Take a few moments to sit somewhere quietly. Close your eyes, take a few deep breaths.
- Drop within and see where your attention is drawn...is there a bodily sensation that captures your attention. Watch it as you breathe, as if you are watching a delicate butterfly on a flower. Observe the inner sensation in great detail.

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- This sensation is your awakening energy (in Tantra called *shakti*). It may be subtle and it may be intense. An example of awakening *shakti* is before you get on stage or go on a first date... energy bubbles in your belly or gets stuck in your throat. You don't need to do anything about it, but by bringing your awareness to it you are tuning into your own process of transformation.
- As you tune into the sensation, notice what comes to mind. Does a longing, a desire or a relationship arise? Awakening energy is like a seed ready to grow up to the sun and become a tree. It contains within it all the information it needs for its growth. The same goes for your life force energy....when you listen to it, it can reveal the desire that will fuel your highest transformation.
- Some people like to consecrate. This is a tantric method to align one's personal desire with divine desire...in other words to find the intention that serves your highest self or true nature. For example instead of praying for a Rolls Royce to make yourself feel worthy, you would call in self-worth. So as you search for your intention, connect to highest consciousness (however that works for you) and ask to be shown alignment. This is like the seedling connecting to the sun high above to help guide it in its growth.

Generally, the new-age experts suggest focusing on where you are going rather than on what you are leaving behind. So rather than intending to be free from your conditioned sexual guilt, you would set the intention to feel healthy and whole in your sexuality.

And then what?

So once you have your intention, bring it with you! Often the opening ceremony will make space for you to set an intention, and even if this is not made explicit you can take a few moments in the ceremony to bring your intention into the field.

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If you are coming with a lover or friends, you may also want to share your intentions with each other. If you choose to do this, share one at a time, and listen fully to each other. After listening say “thank you” to acknowledging the sharing but avoid passing comment on the other’s words. This is called “holding space” (see later).

You may also want to do your own private ritual before the festival starts. This can be as simple as lighting a candle and sitting in front of it, bringing your intention into your heart (Ma Sarita likes to say after setting intention “...or something even better”)

It can be a nice touch to ask for your intention to be blessed by highest consciousness. And many people like to call in protection (from guides/guardians/angels/life itself) that transformation can happen with ease and grace! Growing pains are not essential.



GOING WITH A PARTNER

Some people go to Tantra Festivals alone, and others choose to go with a partner. It can be a very different experience, depending which you choose. There are also a different set of considerations for each situation. This part of the survival guide is intended to help you navigate through the experience as smoothly and joyfully as possible!

Going with a partner can be even more tricky than going alone. Yes, you don't have the stress of wondering will you get a partner for each workshop. But there are a whole set of other challenges. Most of the potential difficulties can be avoided with good preparation through communication.

What is your couple intention?

Firstly you both need to know what is your intention at the festival? Some couples like to go to experience all the workshops together as a couple. Others like to use the opportunity of a festival to explore sharing energy with people other than their long-term partner.

A potential disaster is when this is not discussed and there are different expectations...one person was expecting to do it all together whilst the other is getting excited about partner exchanges. So this pitfall can be avoided by sharing before you come to the festival.

Also, take note this is not black and white...you may want to come together and then feel things out day by day. Festivals are transformative and ever-changing. So even if you both arrive feeling to be together, you may have a shift during the festival. Therefore, it is advised to stay open to tuning into each other and staying in good communication throughout the event.

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Effective Communication

A superb communication structure comes from Margot Anand, and is called ""Desires, Fears, Needs"". The couple sit opposite each other, phones turned off and space created. Then one person talks through all three parts, whilst the other listens. After that you switch roles.

Desires: what desires do you have for this festival? Speak all that come to mind. Even speak apparent contradictory ones, eg: "I desire to spend time with you and I desire to explore connections with others". Don't censor your desires to try and please the other!

Fears: Now share what fears arise related to those desires. Eg: "I fear feeling limited by our relationship and not being able to be authentic with my energy. I fear you finding someone better than me if we open up. I fear jealousy..."

Needs: Now share what you need in order to stay open. Let the fears guide you in this...what would those fears need in order to relax? Eg: "I need to have a tune-in conversation with you every morning at the festival. I need for us to agree together before we open up with other partners...". Try not to impose demands on your partner at this point. You can discuss boundaries later on.

So one person shares in this way and then the other partner does the same. After hearing one another fully, you may want to co-create boundaries if you need them or if you both want to hold your relationship in a particular way.

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For example:



- Some couples feel to share energy with others, but not kisses or more intimate connections.
- Some couples choose to do all the rituals and massages as a couple, but to circulate around in other workshops.
- Some couples are only open to sharing energy with others if it is as a couple inviting others in.
- Some couples choose to let each other go the moment they enter the festival and to meet again at the door on the way out!

There is no right or wrong way. Each relationship is unique, and also the structure may change over time. Do not judge a better or worse way to be. Being more open is not more advanced than being committed...they are simply different experiences.

During the Festival

Stay in good communication. It's wise to have a regular daily tune-in, rather than wait until a problem arises!

If your partner has a different desire or need that you do, try not to get angry with them for this. It is part of human nature, and it is rare for two humans to feel the same 100% of the time! Watch your fears carefully, to help avoid controlling each other out of fear. But also watch for telling the other person to just deal with their jealousy and fear. A little compassion goes a long way.

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Often, deep listening to one another helps to move through a lot of issues more smoothly. Desire contains energy, so when a desire arises, there is usually an emerging of some previously-buried energy. This energy can create strong emotions, and distort your perception of your partner in those moments. The more you simply listen without reacting, the smoother this energy can flow and heal.

Understanding attraction and energy

Remember: the desire for being intimate with others is usually a desire to activate and move energy. We are attracted to the people with the very energy that we are wanting to activate within ourselves.

Understanding this can help us to understand human nature and the nature of desire. There is innocence within desire. There is the need to grow and expand hidden within desire. The baby desires the breast-milk it needs to grow, the tree desires the sunlight and reaches for it. What are you desiring and how do you reach for it?

Having said that, it is not essential to go make love with everyone on the planet to awaken your energy! Tantra offers many different structures for a couple to explore so that they can activate different types of energy themselves. Listen to your beloved's desire for energy and then find out if there is a way to explore that together.

GOING SOLO

Going to a festival alone, brings up a whole bunch of other issues! Tantra festivals are not like a simple music festival...because of the emphasis on sexuality and relating in Tantra, the situation around your state of connection has a spotlight upon it! You could go to a music festival and never even notice if you are alone or with your lover. Not so in Tantra.

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Going solo usually begins with a huge sense of freedom and excitement; anticipation of all the connections that are going to be made. Or perhaps there is some fear and intimidation, if intimacy is an overwhelming situation for you.

The solos are often scanning the place at the opening ceremony, consciously or unconsciously checking for potential connections! As mentioned, it is different from a non-Tantra festival, and this searching can actually create quite an intense atmosphere. Some people love it, others go scuttling off to their tents to get some space. But please remember that this is quite normal at the start of festivals, and will shift over the course of the week.

This is your opportunity to learn about desire and desperation.

- Do you come from a fear of lack, and thus grab quickly to avoid being left alone? Are you like the hungry wolf who hasn't eaten for a week?! Desire is natural...just become aware.
- Do you try to play the field? Wanting a bite out of every pie, but perhaps leaving people left feeling dumped? Do you hug one person, but are actually peeping over their shoulder looking for the next?
- Do you recoil from a high-desire atmosphere? If so are you judging others? Are fears arising? Are you afraid of being left alone? Afraid of getting connected and then letting go? Use this opportunity for learning more about yourself.

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Often there is a flow in the festivals. At first everyone is checking each other out. Partners change from exercise to exercise. As the festival progresses, many people find that they are drawn to working with a particular partner or partners. We naturally find where the energy is for us. At this point many people choose to attend workshops with their chosen partner. Having said that, many people prefer to flow throughout the whole festival, without becoming attached to any one person.

Most experienced teachers know this, and thus will design workshops with more partner exchange and group interaction at the start, and offer couple's workshops later on in the festival.

HOW TO HANDLE "POLY-PARTNERING"

Poly-Partnering is a term coined by Shashi Solluna to describe the festival phenomenon of working with many different partners on quite a deep level. This is a phenomenon that doesn't happen in many situations, and so it brings up its own set of considerations.

It is worth remembering that when it comes to mating, we have inbuilt systems of attachment and jealousy, governed by a complex set of neurotransmitters within us. Tantric meditation is not about making babies, but it can trigger the same primal responses because it is using similar circuitry.

To our animal body, we couple up to create babies and families and pass on our DNA. To our heart, we couple up to merge into love. To our soul, we couple up to look into the eyes and see our true nature reflected back at us...to recognize. Tantra aims to activate that primal sexual energy but to guide it upwards into the heart and soul level.

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So although the intention is there to *sublimate* (transform) the sexual energy, the primal system is still being activated. Thus if you sat in the lap of a partner and breathed together yesterday, you may well feel a surge of chemicals in your system when you see them intertwined with someone else today.

The best thing is not to try to avoid these feelings, nor make someone else wrong for them. These feelings and sensations are not wrong in and of themselves, and therefore we do not have to blame anyone or try to stop them. The best solution, the Tantric solution, is to bring awareness to these sensations.

This can be done alone...by going to your bed and lying down and breathing to make space for the sensations. Or with someone else: sharing with your sharing circle, or a healer, or a trusted friend. Or you might also share with the person who triggered you, though be warned that it is harder to hear the other person when you are the subject of their triggering!

However you choose to do it, try not to get stuck in the story, but drop into your physical body and watch the sensations (if you are sharing with someone else describe to them what you feel). This helps stuck energy to flow and also helps to avoid blame and projection.

If you are on the other side of that situation, and are moving from one partner to the next...try to treat people like precious beings not like consumerables! A little communication goes a long way. Clear completions such as: "Thank you, and I set you free" at the end of exercises is an enormous help in being clear with your energy. Also taking a few minutes to sit and meditate together after any energy exchange gives time for integration and for each partner to come back to their own sovereign self.

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Take care of one another...we are on a shared journey, and these are your fellow travellers. Many festivals have a “Leave no trace” policy when it comes to garbage and waste. You can apply the same to partners: leave no trace of upset or confusion when you move on.



CREATING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Tantra Festivals are great opportunities for expansion and exploration. However, that doesn't mean that you should just throw all boundaries to the wind and leap in where angels fear to tread! Expansion is a delicate process, that has its own timing in each individual.

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ISTA teacher, Baba Dez gives a great example of boundaries. He talks about an experiment with children playing in a school playground with a fence around it. Children played right up against the fence and throughout the playground. Then they took the fence away. The result was that children played right towards the center of the playground. This was where they felt safe. Without the fence, the edges were no longer safe.

The moral of the story? ...if you want to explore your edge, then know your boundaries. Boundaries can be used to facilitate your expansion. They are not just a limitation. However, it is worth remembering that boundaries shift over time, and if we become too rigid with what we think are right for us, we get stuck in a small playground long after we have outgrown it!

A few guidelines on boundaries:

- Boundaries are what feels right for you in each moment.
- Boundaries are expressed through your yes's, your no's and your maybe's.
- A maybe should be treated as a no.
- When two people interact, there are two sets of boundaries! Try to feel into the other person's truth this moment. If you cannot sense, then ask!
- A person may have one set of boundaries with one person and another with someone else. Just because you see someone open with one person, doesn't mean they want to be that open with you!
- Boundaries shift over time. Like that playground fence, as we build trust with one another we can release or move the safety fence.

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- If someone else crosses your boundaries, there is no need to resort to anger immediately. They most likely did not know, so try to give them more gentle feedback first.
- Boundaries can be expressed verbally and non-verbally. Check out your own body-language...do you say one thing but act out another? This is very confusing for others. So try to align your body with your words.
- Boundaries can be like a buoyant energy field that says: "this is my space and all that is harmonious with it is welcome in", or it can be like a huge prison wall that says "F**K OFF". Are you inviting in what you resonate with into your life, or defending out what you fear?
- Rather than having a rigid set of rules of what you think is allowed or not allowed, try instead to be true to the living truth of each moment. Feel into your body and your energy. Are you contracted in this situation? If so, what will make you feel relaxed again? Maybe you need to step away an inch. Maybe you need to ask for something to change. Maybe you need to bow out of this interaction. Each living moment contains the guidance within it. Learn to listen.
- Let go of any ideas you have that "more open is better". It's easy to carry this assumption and thus block access to the living truth of each moment. Sometimes to step back from a hug you don't feel like being in, and to just hold hands instead, can be more opening. It is more opening because it is true in that moment.
- Think of your boundaries like the support fence around a young sapling tree. As the tree grows you need to adjust the fence to give the tree space to expand. Eventually you can remove the fence altogether as the tree can stand well on its own.

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- You may become freer in one aspect of your life and still need support in another. Or perhaps you open up in one relationship, but other connections you still feel contracted. So keep listening in to what's true.

SLEEPING WITH THE GURU

Note: there is a controversial issue in the field of Tantra as to whether teachers should engage sexually with their students or not. This tends to differ from one school to another. Some schools believe that teachers are similar to therapists and therefore should not take advantage of the power differential. Other schools believe that there is a gift in this exchange.

Either which way, just go in with your eyes open.

Be aware of the relationship between student and teacher; and watch out for projections. It is easy to perceive the teacher as some kind of demi-god and later feel let down or even violated. It is important to take full responsibility for your own choices. There is no governing body in Tantra and so you are being called upon to self-govern.

Some people report a life-changing experience from interacting with their teacher, and others feel deeply violated afterwards. So you have to fall back on your own inner gauge. Find your inner truth and follow that. If you are not 100% a yes, then it's a no. Better to wait until you feel a clear yes, than to regret your actions later.

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX

You may hear “Tantra is not just about sex” and yet you will also hear a lot about sex. This survival guide has a lot of guidance relating to sexuality. Tantra is not just about sex, but it does use sexual energy for meditation. This can be with or without sex, as it is possible to work with the energy without engaging in sex. This is called the right-handed path of Tantra. However, this is mostly engaged in by those in monasteries.

Most lay-people choose to engage in sex and relating, but to use Tantric methods to work with the energy. This is the left-handed path of tantra. Tantra Festivals are left-handed, though occasionally you will come across some right-handed methods at a festival.

Thus the issue of sex arises.

It does not mean you have to have sex at a festival. In fact at many festivals there is very little penetrative sex. There is so much sexual energy moved through shaking, dancing, breathwork, massage and energy exchange. Very often the desire for actual penetration diminishes because of the power of these other methods. Sometimes people experience a stronger orgasmic experience whilst shaking or breathing a certain way than they ever had in sex! This is the power of Tantra.

It can actually be deeply liberating for people to discover fulfillment away from penetrative sex. If you are someone who seeks sex as a goal, why not let this go and spend a festival enjoying the many ways of connecting without penetration?

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However, there is no policing at a festival...everyone is a grown-up and entitled to make their own choices. It is recommended to bring a lot of awareness to all interactions. Tantra would encourage a full alignment: sexual chemistry, heart connection and spiritual meeting (conscious connection). Many people think Tantra is about some physical techniques you can do. However, it is much more about being true to the living truth emerging in each and every moment. You could say it requires more listening than doing.

Be safe. Be responsible. Be loving. Be considerate. We are not individuals there to fulfill our own needs...we are all co-creating the festival together. Therefore, your actions matter as they contribute to the whole energetic field. The most powerful shift you can make in tantra with your sexuality is to go from being a taker, with an empty pot you are trying to fill... into becoming a giver with an overflowing vessel of love and energy to share.

The Love Lounge

Most Tantra Festivals contain a special space for relating intimately, often called a "love lounge" or "play space". This is a space that fulfills the options between meeting someone in a workshop and taking them home to your private room/tent. It is a space for playing and exploring intimacy on many levels.

You will find rooms with people massaging, cuddling, caressing, spooning, snoozing together (!), meditating, feeding a blindfolded partner some chocolate...often it looks like a scene from the Kama Sutra! You will see people alone, in twos, threes, fours and mores.

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The guidelines and boundaries for the love lounge space will differ from festival to festival, especially depending on the culture of the country. In more open countries, there may even be a space for sex if partners so choose. In other places a love lounge is restricted to no genital contact, and is kept for non-sexual intimacy (meaning intimacy without genital contact).

As usual, the advice is to only follow what feels right for you...even if you enter a space with quite free boundaries, you are always invited to find your truth within it. Some people feel a certain transformation just from meditating there.

It is also not essential to enter the Love Lounge during the festival. It is there to provide a space for those who wish to explore it. Often people find it safer than taking someone home to their private sleeping area. Others prefer to interact in privacy. Others feel fulfilled from the workshops and do not need more connection than that.

A Tantra Festival is offering spaces, connections and guidance on many levels. It is up to you to find what best serves you and receive what you most need.

HOLDING SPACE AND COMMUNICATION

Tantra Festivals stir things up! The areas of sex, love and spirit are potent subjects for everyone. Plus Tantra works with a lot of energy and so it is powerful. The movement of energy can make you feel stirred, touched, triggered and emotional. Think of it like all the silt at the bottom of a river... tantra stirs it all up as part of the process.

It is just that: a process. And the trick is how to move through the process with as much grace as possible to receive the healing/transformation, without getting stuck in the resistance!

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One of Tantra's core principles is to unite energy with consciousness. All that gets stirred up is energy: whether we feel it as feelings, emotions or stories...it is all energy moving. So to bring healing and transformation, we need to bring consciousness to that energy.

The two main ways to do this are: conscious communication and meditation.

One of the ways we can bring consciousness to communication is through "holding space". That means that as one person talks, the other person (or people) is listening completely. They are not answering in their head, or planning what they will say when their turn comes...they are breathing the other person in and feeling them deeply.

Many Tantra festivals have sharing circles help daily for this purpose. The guidelines for a sharing circle are:

- Everything spoken in circle remains absolutely confidential and is not shared outside of that circle.
- Everyone has an equal chance to speak. Often a timer is used to ensure this, and generally 3-6 minutes is a good period for sharing.
- To hold space, no one else talks when it is someone else's turn. Not even "yes" or "no" as they talk. Just listening. If you are deeply moved as they talk, you can show this by putting your hand on your heart.
- Do not reflect your opinion on what someone else shares. You are only there to share your own experience. Do not be tempted to teach, coach or fix someone else. Trust that to listen is enough. Trust consciousness itself to heal...it is not your job!

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- When it is your turn to talk, try to share not only the story, but also what sensations you feel in your body. This helps to anchor it to the truth of each living moment. It also helps others feel your experience even deeper.

MEDITATION; THE ULTIMATE SURVIVAL TOOL!

As mentioned, the core principle in Tantra is to unite energy with consciousness. Energy is traditionally called *shakti* and consciousness is called *shiva*. These same terms are also used to refer to men (“shivas”) and women (“shaktis”) at tantra festivals because energy is seen as the feminine aspect of life, and consciousness as the masculine aspect. However, don’t get confused...all of us are made of both. In fact we are consciousness experiencing itself as energy, and we are energy becoming conscious.

The amount of energy generated and moved at a Tantra Festival can be huge! This is why they are so powerful and can be so life-changing. However, energy itself can be overwhelming, unless it is met by an appropriate amount of consciousness. This is where meditation fits in.

You can think of it like taking your surfboard into the ocean waves. You will get the biggest experience from the bigger waves. However, you also need to be even more aware! You need to meet a bigger ocean with a more switched on awareness. In fact, the ocean *calls on you* to expand your consciousness to meet it.

This is *shakti*. Energy calls us to presence. This is why in Tantra we use methods that generate a lot of energy, knowing that this will call forth more consciousness.

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If there is not enough awareness to meet energy, then the result is to feel overwhelmed and confused. A kind of lost feeling, as if being overwhelmed by those big waves and tossed about in them. If this starts to happen during a Tantra Festival, then it is highly likely that you are not quite balancing experience with awareness.

It is also about the balance between interacting with others versus time in your inner world. So many exciting people to connect with...yet if you start to feel chaotic or overwhelmed, you can rebalance by sitting down, closing your eyes and going within. If there is too much *shakti*, let that point you back to *shiva*!

There are many forms of meditation. It is not just about sitting and doing nothing! Meditation is about focusing awareness and letting go of distraction. Meditation is a discipline.

Here are a few steps to guide you into a state of meditation:

1. **Create space.** Find a quiet spot where you will not be interrupted, a spot that induces a feeling of peace.
2. **Sit down**, preferably cross-legged (which supports meditation), and close your eyes.
3. **Take a really deep breath** in and exhale with an audible sigh. Sighing helps discharge tension and excess energy. Sigh at least three times...if it is feeling really good then do more.
4. **Keep sighing** until you feel yourself sinking down into your body and towards the earth below you. This can be called “dropping in”. As you do this you also naturally let go of excess thoughts about other people and events.

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5. **Feel your energy sinking** inwards towards your core. It is as if you are reeling in your energy chords from all of your experiences and drawing that energy home to your innermost.
6. **Find a sense of your still internal unshakable center.** Some people like to find this as a point behind the belly, at the center of gravity. Others like to feel an entire column from the perineum to the crown. Wherever you find it, look for the stillest more peaceful place within and simply drop into it. Let go of all external thoughts or distractions... trust that it is safe to let them go for now.
7. Once you **find the inner still point**, just rest your awareness in it and watch the breath expanding and contracting as you breath. You may see breath as a bubble that grows lager on the inhale and then smaller on the exhale. Watch the breath without getting involved in it. Become the passive observer.
8. **Sit and watch the breath** like this for at least ten minutes. Using a timer (most phones have one) is a good idea as your mind can relax and not worry about time. If your mind wanders off into thoughts, simply bring it back...no need to get upset with yourself. It is part of the meditation also.
9. When your meditation is complete, open your eyes and take a couple of minutes more to look at the outer world from this new perspective.

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TANTRIC LINGO: YOUR ESSENTIAL GLOSSARY

Bluff your way into any Tantra Festival with your knowledge of the lingo!!!

No but seriously, there are a lot of terms from Sanskrit that are used at festivals. Here we only mention those most commonly used. This guide is to help prepare you for a whole new sub-culture...

Chakra: an energy center or wheel of energy. These are used in Tantra to understand how sexual energy transforms into spiritual energy.

Dharma: your true life path...how life unfolds when you are aligned with your true nature.

Karma: old patterns that you are trying to transform and heal in order to become your true self.

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Kundalini: a very special type of *shakti* energy that originates at the base of the spine. When it awakens it can be very powerful and rises up the spine, often shaking the body as it rises.

Lingam: the wand of light. This is the Sanskrit term for a man's penis and has divine connotations.

Mantra: is a specific chant that activates energy in a particular way.

Mudra: means gesture. Often this refers to specific hand movements that channel energy in a particular way, although mudra can mean also a body posture.

Prana: life force energy, nourishment.

Satori: an experience in which enough energy builds at the crown chakra to transcend the mind. Can last a few seconds or up to several hours.

Shakti: means energy or power. It is thought of as feminine and thus is often used to describe the Goddess, or used to denote women.

Shiva: means Highest Consciousness. This is thought of as masculine and so can also be used to describe God or indeed to denote men.

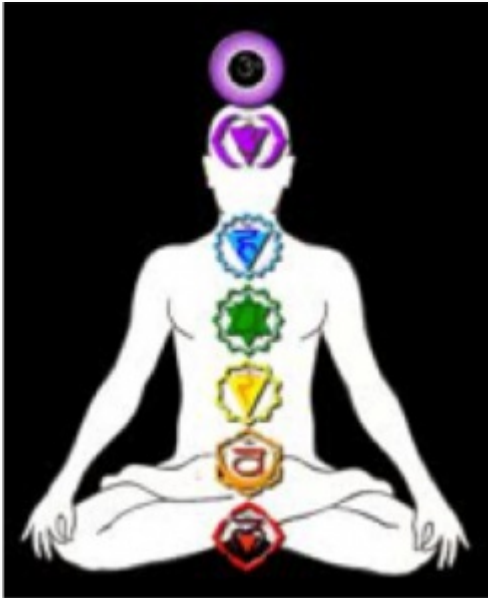
Yab-Yum: is a tantric position for couples, in which the man sits cross-legged and the woman sits in his lap with her legs wrapped around him. This position can be used for both love-making and meditation, and of course for the combination of both.

Yantra: is a shape that channels energy in a particular way. Meditating upon it can shift your own energy field. The SriYantra is very often used in Tantra; it symbolized the union of masculine and feminine through upward- and downward-pointing triangles.

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Yoni: the sacred place. This is the Sanskrit term for a woman's vagina, and is a very sacred connotation.

Chakra System



The chakras' Sanskrit names are:

- 7th: crown (top of the head)
- 6th: ajna (third eye)
- 5th: vishudda (throat)
- 4th: anahata (heart)
- 3rd: manipura (solar plexus)
- 2nd: svadistana (sexual)
- 1st: muladhara (root)

Tantric Chat-Up lines

"Hey babe, I love your *Shakti*...want my *shiva* presence to hold space for your *shakti*?"

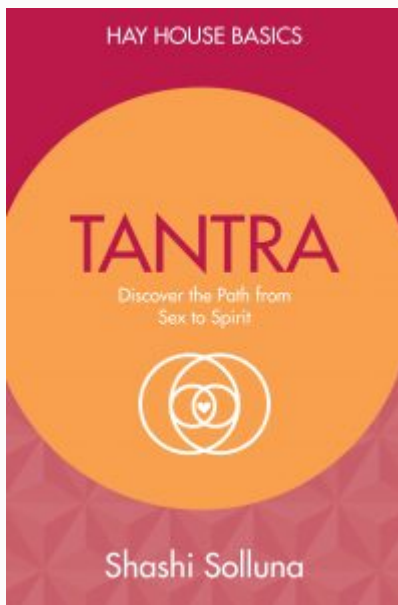
- "My *anahata* expands every time I see you"
- "Wanna come raise your *kundalini* with me?"
- "My wand of light wants to light up your sacred place"
- "Do you want to come and exchange some energy with me?"

Okay, okay, just having some fun! Probably best to steer clear of such lines or you will never be invited back! Best just stick with the eye gazing, and let it unfold from there...

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Discover more about the history, theory spiritual and therapeutic methods of Tantra in Shashi's book: "Tantra: Discover the path from sex to spirit", coming out November 1st 2016.



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