

CHAPTER ONE

BIOLOGY HAS PLANS FOR YOUR LOVE LIFE



Having sex to the point of satiety (that “I’m done!” feeling) is a mammalian *mating* signal to lose interest in one mate, and find novel mates appealing.



Even though humans are pair-bonders, the habit of pursuing passion to the point of quenching desire can set off unsuspected mood swings, cause resentment toward a lover, and erode attraction (Cupid’s poison).



There are two fundamentally different ways of making love: one for fertilization, and one for triggering closer bonding (*karezza*).

Hit by Cupid’s arrow! What an exhilarating, enviable state of affairs. Like everyone else, you want to believe that the key to lasting romantic bliss is a partner with whom you feel a passion so intense that it can never fade. Yet, have you ever fallen in love with total abandon, experienced wonderful lovemaking, been sure you wanted to stay together forever—and then noticed recurring emotional friction arising between you and your beloved? If you’re married, do you have a sense that the honeymoon is over? Perhaps one of you sometimes becomes clingy and demanding while the other feels devoured and needs “space.” Maybe you experience subtle, periodic irritation, or a sense of stagnation that is gradually extinguishing your former delight in each other. Perhaps you engage in spectacular fights interspersed with passionate reconciliation.



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This subconscious alienation—which mates so often encounter despite their desire to remain in love—is the result of an unsuspected poison on Cupid's arrow. When we fall in love, a primitive part of our brain pierces us with a desire for great passion (Cupid's dart). An orgasm feels great, and if it were the end of the story, lovers would be able to do what comes naturally in the bedroom *and* live happily ever after. The problem is that sex—especially the kind with lots of orgasms all around, leading to that feeling of “I'm definitely done!” (sexual satiety)—isn't an isolated event. Orgasm is the peak of a much longer *cycle* of subsequent changes deep in the brain. These lingering effects, and the unwelcome feelings they evoke, can poison our relationship without our conscious awareness. Remarkably, such diverse symptoms as selfishness, unfulfilled needs, communication problems, infidelity, and sexless marriages can all originate in these hidden commands.

In some of us this “poison” takes effect so rapidly that we part after a single tryst. More often there is a period of relative relationship happiness, supported by a short-lived love potion. This honeymoon harmony (or lust) encourages us to bond for a while. On average it's long enough for mates to produce and attach to a child, even if they do not, in fact, procreate.

Creeping disillusionment, born of Cupid's poison, then motivates us to merge our genes with exciting new partners as well (even though we may choose to grit our teeth and resist temptation). Why? Our genes are programmed for their own immortality, and they don't politely wait for opportunity to knock. These little wisps of DNA urge us toward lots of pregnancies *and* a variety of partners. The more dissimilar our offspring, the better the odds that some of them will survive changed conditions or epidemics in order to procreate. Our willingness to shop for unfamiliar genes would once have helped protect small populations from the dangers of inbreeding.

Moreover, our genes do their best to keep us to a tight schedule. Anthropologist Helen Fisher estimates that we're molded to stay together for about four years. Across fifty-eight diverse cultures, she found that divorce rates peak then.² However, in Muslim countries where divorce was easy to arrange, marriages tended to end even sooner.

In short, both the sweet and sour phases of romance improve the chances that our genes will make it into the next generation—even if we

are left cynical or brokenhearted. Our genetic mating program is working brilliantly. It just doesn't have *our* best interests in mind. As pair-bonding mammals, we benefit in surprising ways from trusted companionship with a mate, and when we sacrifice those benefits to our genetic success, it hurts.

Usually when Cupid's poison curdles a romance, we conclude that we either chose the wrong mate or that men and women are just hopelessly different. Yet it's not our differences that cause this distress. It is what we have in common: involuntary, biological responses that are as unconscious as blinking. We are *programmed* for this painful unraveling just as surely as we are programmed to fall deliriously in love in the first place.

Of course, resentment and issues in intimate relationships can also come from other factors, such as money-management differences, childhood trauma, and personal eccentricities. Yet this hidden biological factor could prove the most reliable when it comes to churning up recurring relationship friction. At the very least, it can make other challenges more difficult to resolve.

One clue that emotional distance is programmed into our intimacy is that marital happiness typically erodes over time.³ Mysteriously, however, friendships or other close family relationships are *immune* to this programmed deterioration.⁴ Could this be because romantic relationships plunge us into passion to the point of "enough already!" while other close relationships do not? Sounds farfetched. Yet for most mammals *frenzied mating to the point of disinterest (surfeit) is the signal to become restless and move on* to another dance partner. Could our mammalian heritage have saddled us with similar subconscious responses to sexual satiety, which also make *us* restless? Are we wired to grow apart from a familiar mate—even though we're still programmed to seek the benefits of long-term companionship?

More important, what can we do if we wish to protect our relationships from Cupid's poison? We can manage our sexual encounters differently, so we're less susceptible to Cupid's maddening sting, and more inclined to

Most of us tend to wear intellectual blinders, often failing to recognize something until we first have an explanation for it . . . or at least, an expectation of it. Believing is seeing.
—Barash and Lipton,
The Myth of Monogamy




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find love a steady, continuing delight. Both ancient wisdom and modern scientific findings point to how we can achieve this end, but to benefit from this information we need to see clearly what we're up against.

THE COOLIDGE EFFECT

Consider what happens when you drop a male rat into a cage with a receptive female rat. First you'll see a frenzy of copulation. (Possibly it gets lonely in the lab, given experiments like this one.) After a while, the fireworks stop. Mr. Rat heads for the recliner, toting the remote. As a result of his changed body chemistry, Mrs. Rat now looks uninteresting to him.⁵ However, if Miss Ratty (a new female) shows up, his exhaustion will miraculously fade long enough for him to gallantly attempt his fertilization duties.

A rodent's renewable virility is not indicative of an insatiable libido. Nor does it increase his well-being—although it may look (and temporarily feel to him) that way. His behavior correlates with surges of neurochemicals in his tiny brain, which command him to leave no willing female unfertilized.



Conniving genes can be slave drivers in this regard. Males of the furry little marsupial species (*Antechinus stuartii*) are so preoccupied with copulation that they destroy their own immune systems, and die of various diseases at the conclusion of mating season.⁶ When scientists furnish the animals with some artificial will power by tempering their male sex hormones, their immune systems keep them in working order.

True love ends even more abruptly for the male praying mantis (at least for those unlucky enough to “get it on” in captivity). The female causes the male to deliver his sperm by chewing off his head. (Suggestion: Never “do lunch” with a female mantis.)

Animals that are less concerned about closure simply identify and reject those with which they have already sexually satiated themselves. Scientists know this reflex as the “Coolidge effect.” It earned its name many years ago when President Coolidge and his wife were touring a farm. While the president was elsewhere, the farmer proudly showed Mrs. Coolidge a rooster that “could copulate with hens all day long, day after day.” Mrs. Coolidge coyly suggested that the farmer share that impressive feat with Mr. Coolidge, which he did.



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The president thought for a moment and then inquired, “With the same hen?”


“No, sir,” replied the farmer.

“Tell that to Mrs. Coolidge,” retorted the president.

The Coolidge effect has been widely observed among mammals, even in females. Some female rodents, for example, flirt a lot more—arching in inviting displays—with unfamiliar partners than with those with which they’ve already copulated.⁷

Does a variation of the Coolidge effect show up in human behavior? I recall a conversation I once had with a man who had grown up in Los Angeles. “I quit counting at 350 lovers,” he confessed, “and I guess there must be something terribly wrong with me because I always lost interest in them sexually so quickly. Some of those women are really beautiful, too.” At the time of our chat his third wife had just left him for a Frenchman and he was discouraged. She had lost interest in him.

Women sometimes report that their taste in men changes around ovulation, as does the way they see men. They say they’re more drawn to Don Juans, and less likely to relate to a man as a person. In short, they’re more likely to see him as a tempting hunka burnin’ genes.



The biological self is petty and quite cruel, and strangely enough very easily finds imperfections while at the same time caving in to really low standards. Some of the petty crap in my head about my boyfriend says: he’s so WHITE, I need a dark, exotic, and mysterious man! His hair is thin; I don’t want my children to have thin hair. The voice inside assesses and rejects one’s current mate based on self-serving, shallow ideas that have to do with physical characteristics or status.

—Lisa

Strictly speaking, humans may not experience the immediacy of the Coolidge effect (unless they’re at an orgy). For us, habituation more often takes the form of *decreased sexual responsiveness with long-term mates*. We may be more like monkeys. When male monkeys were paired repeatedly with the same females (who were *always* in the mood, thanks to daily hormone injections), the males copulated less and less frequently, and with



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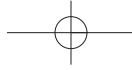
declining enthusiasm, over a three-and-a-half-year period. Yet these slackers hurriedly changed their ways when novel females showed up.⁸

Could our mammalian brains be meddling with our capacity for sustaining intimate relationships? (The mammalian brain lies beneath the rational brain. It governs sex and love and is surprisingly similar in *all* mammals.) Most mammals do not form pair-bonds as stable as ours. Yet even among our few monogamous mammalian cousins, no species is *sexually exclusive*. They burrow together and co-parent, but they are frequently impelled to gather genes from strangers on the side. Those enterprising genes like to keep gene pools nice and fresh. Habituation to one's partner apparently serves evolution's goals by making novel partners look *tempting*. Think of it this way: If sexual fidelity guaranteed more and fitter offspring, no mammals would fool around.

Mammals generally have rigid periods of being in heat, dictated by hormones, while humans can have sex whenever the urge arises. However, our hormones, too, regulate us. Unfortunately our version seems to be like starting and stopping in heavy traffic. Between passion bouts, we're likely to find a mate increasingly exhausting, jealous, or impossible to please. And our mate is likely to find us self-absorbed, unhelpful, or unaffectionate—except when pursuing sex.

At the start of our marriage, we slept together nude. Soon she started wearing underclothes. She gradually stopped enjoying having me put my arm around her or cuddle up to her. Sometimes, with little or no provocation, she would sleep in another room, which seemed rather callous, and left me feeling lonely and frustrated. Sex grew less and less frequent, and finally she moved into another room, permanently. I was going on the assumption that if she could just enjoy sex more, i.e., have more orgasms, we would have sex more often and my needs would be better satisfied. So, I was always trying to give her a good pounding. Oh well. . . .—Brent

Research confirms that as the duration of partnership increases, sexual desire declines in women—while desire for tenderness declines in men.⁹ This miserable program can keep us partner-hopping, adding mating opportunities on the side—or just plain frustrated, baffled, and bad



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tempered. And we never suspect that the drive to *exhaust* sexual desire is playing a role in this familiar pattern. Instead, we believe that sexual satiety is a good bonding strategy for mates. As we'll see, there is reason to suspect that it actually speeds the process of habituation, subtly shifting lovers' perceptions of each other for the worse.

Remarkably, past sages of various traditions observed that sexual satiety indeed drives partners apart, causing feelings of depletion and disharmony. They also discovered a way around the problem. They recognized that there are *two* fundamentally different approaches to lovemaking, depending upon its purpose.

Fertilization-driven sex is for procreation. Climax launches sperm to meet egg. In contrast, bonding-based sex has harmony and well-being as its primary objectives. *Both methods entail intercourse* to ease sexual tension effectively. Fertilization-driven sex achieves this goal with a neurochemical crash followed by a surprisingly slow return to homeostasis (that is, pre-orgasm balance). Bonding-based sex eases sexual tension via gentle intercourse mingled with deep relaxation and lots of soothing affection, leading to refreshing feelings of satisfaction and lingering equilibrium.

Making love is like inflating a balloon. Having an orgasm is like popping the balloon, but if you finish without an orgasm you are like a balloon that takes several days to gradually deflate, leaving you much longer to enjoy the inflated feeling.—Rob

HOW DID THAT WORK OUT?


Theory is great, but after years of fitful explorations I was lucky enough to meet a partner willing to experiment open-mindedly with this unfamiliar approach to intercourse. When we got together ten years ago, my husband, Will, and I began our relationship with bonding-centered lovemaking. We emphasized generous affection, and did not pursue orgasm (although orgasm still occurred on rare occasions). This type of lovemaking is an ancient practice that is hinted at in various traditions. I now think of it as *karezza* (from the Italian for “caress,” pronounced ka-RET-za), a term coined almost a century ago by a Quaker doctor.





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The technique is not based on control. [During intercourse] you are not seeking to avoid orgasm or to manipulate your bodily energies; you are merely closing your eyes, feeling those energies stream into your heart, head and genitals and those of your lover, and allowing them to circulate. . . . You are always relaxing, relaxing, falling back into the heart. Effortless awareness is the key. All your energies will be drawn upward, diffused throughout the body. . . . As this takes place, lustful tendencies will be transmuted into feelings of love and the need for conventional orgasm will lessen.¹⁰



When we looked back a year after beginning this practice, we had to admit that we were amazed. Life wasn't perfect, but there were definite, positive changes. No more yeast infections or urinary tract infections for me, no more alcohol abuse or chronic depression (or prescription antidepressants) for Will. Lovemaking was less intense, but left us more contented. Even now, we never seem to tire of each other's touch, and actually enjoy helping each other. Best of all, there is a very welcome, lighthearted playfulness in our relationship, which allows us to laugh about, and resolve, most sources of friction effortlessly.

As a human sciences teacher who cheerfully pores over medical abstracts for hours at a time, Will was curious to see if science could shed any light on these improvements. He delved into research about oxytocin, the so-called "cuddle hormone." This material went far toward explaining why selfless, non-goal-oriented lovemaking might have enhanced our health and countered depression¹¹ and addiction.¹² For example, HIV-positive patients survive longer when in relationship.¹³ Wounds heal twice as fast with companionship, as compared with isolation.¹⁴ In primates, the caregiving parent, male or female, lives longer.¹⁵ Oxytocin is probably the chief hormonal player behind all of these gains.

My husband also realized that, by taking it easy and avoiding climax during our karezza lovemaking, we were apparently benefiting from less dramatic fluctuations in our brain chemistry. This is because orgasm is experienced in the brain. It's a complex sequence of neurochemical-hormonal events even more than a genital event. For example, you can stick an electrode in someone's brain, or spinal cord, and produce the sensation of orgasm without touching *any* genitals.



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Instead of an electrode, the body uses a spike of neurochemicals to trigger the sensation of orgasm. What goes up at the moment of orgasm must come down. Although scientists aren't generally acknowledging that there is a post-orgasmic letdown, evidence of it has already turned up in the research of those seeking to develop sexual enhancement drugs. This subconscious cascade of neurochemical events, which appears to take a full two weeks to return to homeostasis, is behind the ability of Cupid's poison to sour our relationships.


During this recovery phase lovers may feel needy, irritable, anxious, depleted, or desperate for another orgasm (to ease related symptoms).

They don't realize that they are temporarily off balance. This is a recurring trigger for disharmony and compulsive behavior, and it's built right into our romantic relationships. Yet this recovery phase is nearly invisible to sexually active adults, because at first we typically try to resolve any uneasiness with *another* orgasm. This instinctive response pushes us toward further sexual satiety—and subsequent emotional distance. You have to hand it to those genes of ours. It's a clever way of making sure we engage in as much fertilization-driven sex as possible—before losing our desire to remain sexually exclusive with a mate.

Thanks to this innate program, we seldom discover the sense of well-being and contentment that accompanies the move toward equilibrium using karezza, that is, bonding-centered lovemaking. Instead we tend to focus on blaming each other for our changed feelings. "If only he would be more affectionate or supportive." "If only she would stop processing her feelings and just have sex."

As we will see, this post-orgasmic recovery period is likely to underlie such diverse phenomena as the one-night stand, the sexless marriage, infidelity, and porn addiction. It contributes to the common experience that the honeymoon seldom lasts longer than a year. It is why close friendships that bloom into love affairs often turn sour.

The bottom line is that the subconscious mating program behind our spontaneous sexual appetite works perfectly for maximum gene



Forget breast implants. It's never about big or little, or short or tall, or blonde or brunette. It's only about "old" and "new." Hugh Grant had Elizabeth Hurley at home, and he wanted Marvin Hagler in a wig.
—Bill Maher, comedian



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proliferation. It just doesn't happen to have our individual well-being at heart. Dutch scientist Gert Holstege, who reported that his brain scans of men ejaculating look like brain scans of people shooting heroin,¹⁶ once remarked that we are all addicted to sex.¹⁷ He was acknowledging that sexual impulsiveness *naturally* leads in the direction of satiety—and, given opportunity, even compulsion.

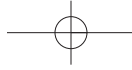
MATING AND BONDING, THE TWO PEDALS

If we do what we've always done, we'll get what we've always gotten. We're wired that way. Yet we don't just possess a mating program. We also possess a bonding program. It originated as a mechanism for bonding infant mammals to their caregivers, but it has also evolved to encourage us to fall in love—for a while (pair-bond). It works on a mutual exchange of subconscious cues, behaviors that we're encoded to find pleasurable at any age. As we will see, we can refine our innate inclinations by using these bonding behaviors to strengthen our enthusiasm for lasting intimacy indefinitely—especially if we're willing to transform intercourse itself into a bonding behavior when procreation is not desired.

Lack of cuddling eventually leads to lack of desire for it, whether through laziness, habit, resentment, or indifference. Cuddling (all affection included) causes the desire for more. It is a beneficent biofeedback machine, just as the absence of affection seems to be the opposite. Everyone will be familiar with young lovers seeming unable to get near enough to each other. Well, although we've been married for ages, we've experienced the same, repeatedly, as a result of initially scheduling cuddling—even a minute a day—and watching it snowball.—Keith

Humans experiencing companionate love feel calm and secure and experience social comfort and emotional union.¹⁸ Given the powerful psychological and health benefits of happy union, karezza lovemaking may prove surprisingly beneficial for socially monogamous mammals like us.

I now think of our mating and bonding programs like two pedals that drive our intimate relationships. The mating program (the urge to exhaust ourselves sexually as thoroughly as possible) is the “habituation pedal,”



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because it so often causes partners to get fed up with (habituate to) each other. The bonding program, on the other hand, is the “harmony pedal,” because it makes togetherness more deeply satisfying. With this simple knowledge, we can steer for the results we want.

While Will was learning about the hidden endocrine cycle of sexual satiety, I continued to root around in the esoteric attics of some of the planet’s most influential religions. There’s a surprising amount of lore about how intimate relationships can serve as a path to deeper union and clearer spiritual perception. We don’t hear much about this material because the better-known religious directives focus almost exclusively on social conventions and generating more believers.

In the familiar doctrines, the concept of continence equates with the sexual abstinence of monks and nuns. Yet it appears that some of our most inspiring spiritual teachers have alluded to the transcendental power of sexual continence during intercourse, within intimate relationships. I’ll share some of what I found in the Wisdom segments between chapters.

WHY NOW?

Obviously, humanity’s subconscious mating agenda is not a new challenge, but there are two developments that make it more urgent to cultivate authentic harmony between couples. First, our culture has changed. Until recently, across much of the globe, church and state kept a rein on sexual expression. Marriages were often arranged. Divorce was first impossible, and then heavily censored. Birth control was unavailable or prohibited. And unsanctioned relationships were strictly punished. All these features of life ensured that any emotional separation between partners was partly masked by the fact that they had to continue to live together and raise their inevitable children. These circumstances also meant that there was just plain less fooling around after the honeymoon period (in most couples’ lives). That left relationships stagnant but less volatile.

Today social and civil sanctions in the West cannot hold mates in artificial bondage. This means that our underlying mammalian mating programming is ripping couples, and families, apart with increasing efficiency. As we no longer live in tribes based on mutual support, this outcome is agonizing for all concerned.



Moreover, with each new generation there may be fewer “swans” (couples who escape habituation). When researchers looked at marital happiness across generational groups, they discovered that the oldest couples were more likely to be somewhat happier. Analysts put this down to the fact that older couples married when people held more pragmatic views about marriage, support for marriage was stronger, and couples were more committed to the norm of lifelong marriage.¹⁹

However, there may be a second very potent, but unacknowledged, factor at work. We are guinea pigs in a massive international experiment. Today’s titillating media routinely evokes supranormal (that is, above-normal) sexual stimulation in our brains. Consider these titles from mainstream men’s and women’s magazines: “Sex with Someone New—Every Night” (via acting out sexual fantasy) and “How to Find *His* G-Spot.” Or Chile’s precocious under-eighteen youth, whose enthusiasm for casual sex is boggling minds like nothing the country has witnessed before.²⁰

This focus on sexual gratification speeds up the involuntary workings of our mating program by urging ever-more-rapid sexual surfeit (and subsequent disinterest) between lovers. The result is often shorter intimate connections, and increasing distrust between the sexes—frequently leading to despair about relationships and unhealthy isolation. In essence, our innate program for genetic success is working so efficiently that it’s finally on the verge of backfiring. The wedge of mistrust and disillusionment between the genders is widening.

Q: What’s the difference between a new spouse and a new dog?

A: After a year, the dog is still excited to see you.

Yet the more my husband and I learn, the more we realize that everyone is fundamentally innocent. We, our exes, you, your exes, and all our parents have only been doing what our genes programmed us to do, that is, get bored, tired, or irritated, be disappointed with each other, (often) fool around, break up—and start it all again. We had no idea that orgasm is not mere pleasure or release, but that satiation tends to cause us to devalue or alienate our mates. Avoiding sex doesn’t solve the problem because sexual frustration continues to build without resolution.

On the other hand, pursuing orgasm nonstop to relieve tension poses its own hidden risks of habituation and compulsive behavior. Some sexual tension is natural. It’s there to encourage us to connect with mates. Yet, as we will see, especially intense sexual frustration can be the result of an



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urgent desire for relief from feelings of restlessness, irritability, and apathy—feelings that sexual satiety *itself* can bring on. Resolving the latter with *more* sexual stimulation can send us into a downward spiral. We can escape by moving toward enlivening equilibrium using the bonding behaviors and approach to lovemaking mentioned earlier.

Meanwhile, one can sympathize with the outrage of religious fundamentalists and aggrieved feminists at the current chaos. Too many people are indeed seeking relief for inflamed libido using casual sex and porn. However, our righteous critics may find that mastering bonding-based lovemaking also eases their harsh judgments of others. In any case, shaming those caught in the passion cycle, male or female, has the unintended effect of making the search for sexual gratification more compelling. If we want to explore the power of karezza to increase the stability and harmony in our intimate relationships, we have to address our current habits compassionately and creatively—without blame. Those habits are the outcome of a logical experiment: determined pursuit of orgasm in the belief that it would increase our psychological health and well-being. Our task now is to appraise the results as honestly as we can, and then choose our direction consciously.

The good news is that moving beyond impulse, to conscious equilibrium in our sex lives, tends to furnish a sense of inner wholeness. For example, my husband and I now feel less susceptible to manipulation of any kind, whether by advertisers, politicians, or others. You, too, may find that without the feelings of lack, uneasiness, and neediness that mysteriously show up after exhausting sexual desire, you simply aren't as vulnerable to temptations like junk food, reckless spending, or fear-based manipulation.

WHY ME?

To explore karezza I had to set aside the popular wisdom of the last six decades. It holds that orgasms are purely a source of pleasure and beneficial release, which, if not forthcoming spontaneously, should be pursued by such means as are available, both natural and artificial. My explorations contradicted that thinking and slowly led to a personal paradigm shift. I no longer think of orgasm as a genital event that ends shortly after climax. Instead, I'm intrigued by orgasm's lingering neurochemical realities and







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what they mean in terms of our perceptions of each other, the quality of our relationships, and our evolution (both physical and spiritual).

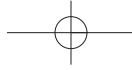
As it turns out, various disciplines have uncovered vital pieces of this other paradigm. Evolutionary biologists observed that our genes' primary goal is not necessarily harmony between mates, but rather greater success for themselves. Neuroscientists uncovered the fact that potent sexual stimulation affects the brain somewhat like an addictive drug. Psychiatrists and psychologists observed that shifts in our subconscious *feelings* toward individuals radically change our *perceptions* of them. And little-known texts from various spiritual traditions revealed an intimate union between men and women, which brings them back into harmony with each other and their neighbors.



Alas, the inhibited flow of information between disciplines sometimes hampers insights that integrate diverse perspectives. Biologists tend not to refine their conclusions based upon intriguing parallels in ancient texts; neuroscientists have not studied the effect of neurochemical fluctuations on how lovers perceive their intimate partners in the course of their return to homeostasis after orgasm; and psychologists and psychiatrists are discouraged from contemplating the merits of sex without orgasm because Freud, Kinsey, and others caused it to be viewed as a paraphilia (sexual disorder). As a result they conflate the terms "sex-positive" and "orgasm-positive." Finally, theologians familiar with the texts I studied are often inclined to ignore the wholesome possibilities of sex outside of propagation, on the assumption that their Creator cares only for mankind's unfettered multiplication.

Unconstrained by any of these disciplines, I collected clues from all of them. I discovered that there was a remarkably strong case to be made for why humans might want to master *another* approach to intercourse for when conception is not the goal.

You may be wondering what motivated me to explore making love without orgasm in the first place. After all, our mating program is subconscious and has been with us since before we were human. We're not *supposed* to notice it. In fact, none of us can really see the challenge we're up against until we unhook from our mating program by experimenting with another way of easing sexual tension for an extended period of time, and *then* return to fertilization-driven sex to experience the difference.



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For better or worse, I had ample opportunity to make that experiment. I was very drawn to the idea of Taoist lovemaking when I read my first book about it, but very confused about the instructions for *doing* it. I was sure that passion fitted into the equation *somewhere*. As a result, my love life resembled the movie *Groundhog Day*, where the main character seems doomed to relive the same events over and over forever.

In truth I was slowly learning some of the basics about our subconscious mating program. They didn't perfectly fit my understanding of the Taoist model I was trying to follow. Yet, remarkably, they did line up with the science my husband unearthed years after we met and began trying karezza.

In sharing what I've learned, I'll begin with my earliest teacher: my own experience. It zigzagged quite a bit as I set out to explore some ancient ideas that promised greater relationship depth and harmony. Gradually I realized that I was not the only one plagued by fragile relationships; separation was actually creeping into *most* intimate relationships of any duration. Other unexpected insights followed, and the next two chapters relate some of the "ah-ha's," as well as the bruises I sustained, during my early efforts. I think of this period as the "yin," or receptive, phase of my adventure, because I did my best to stay open to the insights entering my life, even though they were not scientific, and did not fit my worldview at the time.

After Will arrived, the objective information he turned up complemented my earlier, subjective observations in quite unexpected ways. I think of this phase as the "yang" phase, because Will's input (based on the current understanding of many insightful researchers) provided a much fuller, more grounded, understanding of what I had experienced and observed. His material, which shapes Chapters Four (At the Heart of the Separation Virus), Five (The Passion Cycle), Six (The Road to Excess), and Eight (Science That Binds), reveals the workings of our subconscious mating and bonding programs in scientific terms.

Even if you don't think you like science, you may find this material surprisingly absorbing. We'll consider how our domineering genes manipulate us to fulfill their agenda at the expense of our unions. We'll look more closely at the orgasm cycle, and consider what current findings can tell us about how it sometimes becomes a slippery slope to compulsive behavior. We'll also examine possible reasons behind karezza's ability to contribute to healing, balance, and stronger emotional bonds.





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In Chapter Seven (Learning to Steer) we'll address how we can shift the balance between our mating and bonding programs. Chapter Nine (Bridging the Gap) explains how we came to use orgasm as "mood medicine" and why that strategy can fail pair-bonding mammals like us. It also suggests strategies for introducing others to the concept of karezza. Chapter Ten (The Path of Harmony) recaps the practice of karezza itself.

Be aware that the chapters with practical suggestions are perhaps the *least* important parts of this book. Once you understand the origins and mechanics of the challenge mankind faces, you, too, may find your own way toward the option of generous, affectionate karezza. Until you have fully integrated that information, all practical suggestions for eluding your subconscious mating program are likely to prove pleasant, but somewhat empty, exercises. In fact, you could end up in a *Groundhog Day* loop of your own.