

# Tantric Sex and Menopause

## Contents

Acknowledgments xi

Preface

Why We Wrote This Book xiii

Introduction

Making Love through Midlife and Beyond 1

1

Potential

The Power and Hidden Gifts of Menopause 5

2

Biology

Harnessing Your Hormones 15

3

Tantric Overview

Your Body Is Not Broken 32

4

Tantric Orientation

Recirculating Sexual Energy 47

5

Tantric Map

Love Keys for the Journey 58

6

Tantric Territory

Going In, Down, and Through 83

7

Tantric Source

Engaging Breasts and Heart 91

8

Tantric Journey

Going Deep, Going Slow, Going Wild 106

9

Healing

From Pain to Pleasure and Beyond 125

10

Emotional Underworld

Cleaning Up Debris from the Past 136

11

Embodiment

From Womb Wilderness to

Womb Wildness 166

12

Transformation

Recommended Books and Resources 201

About the Authors 205

1

Potential

The Power and Hidden Gifts of Menopause

*In Celtic cultures, the young maiden was seen as the flower; the mother, the fruit; and the elder woman, the seed. The seed is the part that contains the knowledge and potential of all the other parts within it.*

CHRISTIANE NORTHRUP, M.D., *WOMEN'S BODIES, WOMEN'S WISDOM*

THROUGH THIS POETIC AND PROFOUND description we are absorbed into a world where the role and presence of the elder woman was revered, respected, and held value. It was a world in which a woman was nurtured through the next stage by her elders with love, reassurance, wisdom, and encouragement to go inward, to rest deeply within, to sense the wellspring of her spirit and intuitive knowing; to feel herself from within her being. By contrast, a Westernized woman today is faced with a constant focus on the outer world and the way it perceives her, and a barrage of imagery and information telling her to be younger, look younger, and avoid as much as possible the process of aging. She needs to have grown up or somehow become immersed in cultures that value *all* the stages of womanhood in order for her to naturally feel her innate worth at this time.

One such culture is the Maya, whose traditions provide very specific care for a woman's body from girlhood onward through menstruation, pregnancy, birthing, mothering, and beyond. In Western culture, when it comes to life transitions for both men and women, we are lost in ignorance. In so many traditions and indigenous societies, and in much of our past genetic heritage, the knowledge of the body and what happens along the way is passed on with far more grace and insight than in ours. Instead we find our information in books and on the internet, never really knowing what or whom to believe or trust in the flood of information available to us, which is often tainted by a medical patriarchal mindset.

However, the silence that our forebears may have lived through around this transition is being broken, and that's definitely a good thing, but it is exceedingly common in the Western world that women are still not equipped with enough knowledge or support to move through menopause with more ease. As a culture we handle the menopause transition in a way very similar to the way we handle the onset of menstruation in earlier life, where there is typically very little support for the young girl moving into womanhood.

As women our bodies have a tremendous impact on our daily lives through menstruation, pregnancy, birthing, motherhood, and then menopause, in a way that men do not experience. All of these transitions change a woman, and if she listens deeply, the transition of menopause can carry profound wisdom that seems to simply arise within her—intuitive wisdom that can inform, transform, and cherish. It can change a woman's psyche, inviting her into her own awakening. Hot flashes (or flushes) can be seen not only as annoying occurrences but as a phenomenon in the body to be inquired into and be curious about. Therefore, menopause can be a powerful and transformational doorway ushering her into the next stage of a woman's life.

Yet tragically, the modern medical model and society in general puts the aging woman on the shelf. Men her age are sometimes looking for younger women and her self-esteem gets a battering, while at the same time she is expected to be all for everyone—including in the bedroom—and she may never really feel as if she is living up to that. Many women have passed through the intense mothering phase or have simply arrived at a stage

where they don't feel able to continue living the way they have been.

In this situation a woman can evaluate the known risks and opt to make minimal adjustments. Or she may see the potential rewards and find a new resolve to increasingly honor her body more, to not compromise anymore—sexually or in family, work, or friendships—and consciously make a shift. Sometimes such a step means the end of a relationship or marriage, or at least it may precipitate upheaval. It may mean finding a new purpose, reinventing herself, or moving into her later-life's calling, sharing more of her creative gifts. She may feel called to be in more active service in her community or as a grandparent. Not least of all, she may experience a new awakening in her sexuality. Some women find that their lives improve immensely after menopause, that they are happier, healthier, and enjoy a fulfilling sex life. They often have a new and irreverent boldness to say what they think and do what they want. The bold one replaces the "good girl" as she begins to make more choices that please her, instead of always pleasing others. She becomes less willing to make excuses or compromises for others. By this time, women who have allowed others to step over their boundaries, violate them, cross them, and perhaps walk all over them seem to draw a line in the sand. It's as if their hormones are calling to them to stand up, step up, and show up in a way that was never before apparent. A welcome and incredibly empowering bonus is that she can now make love without any possibility or fear of becoming pregnant.

However, for others clearly it's a very different story. Some women feel quite broken and emotionally distraught during menopause, and carry a deep lack of self-worth, shame, even self-hatred, for not living up to the expectations of society, peers, family, or even self. Without adequate support, a woman may flounder and fall into depression and anxiety and can shut down on the emotional, physical, and sexual -levels. In the privacy of her own company, a woman may despair at the sight of her skin that was once beautiful, supple, and glowing and is now showing signs of age. Women are social creatures who generally value connecting. The separation within families, each living in separate homes cut off from others, leaves some women feeling isolated and unfulfilled. Women can easily slip through the social cracks at this stage, and sometimes develop illnesses, gain unwanted weight, or have a myriad of health issues.

At this time women need to be together to support and nurture one another, to acknowledge and strengthen each other. A woman who is more supported, informed, and aware of her potential and the potency of this phase of her life can rise through it like a phoenix that empowers the next stage.

This is the life phase in which a woman who has followed society's mandates by rote has the potential to awaken to her own self. She is being called to dig deeper than the identity of wife, partner, mother, or profession to find something that can continually sustain and nourish her from within throughout her mature years.

#### Menopause Life Expectancy

An estimated 6,000 U.S. women reach menopause every day (more than 2 million a year). With a life expectancy in the Western world estimated at 79.7 years, a woman who reaches the age of 54 can now reasonably expect to live to at least the age of 84, barring an unforeseen health crisis or accident.\*

\*Source: [www.menopause.org](http://www.menopause.org).

### WOMEN'S LONGEST LIFE PHASE

Given the statistics in the box above, at least one-third of a woman's life on earth will be spent as a menopausal woman, and for some it will be half her life. In a world that gives little value to the aging population, where

youthfulness is a multibillion-dollar business, the prospect of moving through the change of life may never have been more daunting or disheartening than it is now. Women are constantly besieged by imagery in the media suggesting that youth is to be worshipped and aging is to be feared. Due to increased means of communication and prolonged lifespan, we are the first civilization to be confronted with this kind of “aging phenomenon.” Yet, as noted above, for those who move with ease through menopause, this is a substantial amount of time in which to develop and celebrate a personal renaissance.

### ***Beyond Society’s Limitations***

Again, more than ever previously, women are being called to redefine themselves beyond the lens of advertising, and beyond the lens of our social and sexual conditioning. Somehow women need to bridge the gap to this next stage of life if they are to be happy, empowered, and inspired. Somehow they must make meaning of their lives to go beyond society’s limitations.

### ***Loss of Interest in Sex***

While some report feeling freed from the fears of pregnancy, many menopausal women find that the desire for intimacy simply has become nonexistent—they groan at the mention of the word *sex*, and feel resigned to the fact that sex as they know it is no longer satisfying. Sex has become “less important,” yet they may still experience stress in their relationship. Could this stress possibly be the unacknowledged sexual tensions, hurts, and disappointments that can occur between man and woman? Or possibly a loud call from her psyche and body begging her to question whether the conventional way of making love still works for her?

Often a strong voice begins to call out in relation to sex. Through menopause a woman can begin to find her own voice and listen to a deeper one calling from inside. “Not this again . . .” If her pattern has been to please man, which is a very deep imprinting in all women, then her internal radar system is on high alert by this time, telling her *No more!*

But she is often flailing to find a solution because her heart still yearns for the intimacy of relationship, yet her body may not go where it used to go with conventional sex. She may feel herself in a double bind because in so many relationships, sex is the gel that has brought a couple together intimately, yet now sex is the very thing that makes her feel more and more separate, driving her away from the very one she wants to love. In a way the aching love inside her just can’t get out, it can’t find a passage. Her emotions can at times become overwhelming and uncontrollable and her hormones may wreak havoc on her beautiful body.

## WHY TANTRA WORKS FOR MENOPAUSAL WOMEN

Through a more informed approach to sex and beginning to access the true source of her sexual vitality and its potential, a woman can open to herself again. The symptoms that up to 75 percent of women experience around menopause—loss of interest in sex/intimacy, dryness, thinning vaginal walls, pain, anxiety, and so on—can be a surprising doorway into the incredibly gentle and relaxing world of the tantric approach to her own body as an individual . . . and if she has a partner, to a more relaxed and more conscious way of making love.

In addition, and not only when she is moving through menopause, for a woman to see that she is an equal yet opposite force to man, complementary and not subsidiary to him, can be a welcome relief. Metaphorically, the power or force that went into the body’s creation of eggs is now able to lie dormant, not to atrophy, shrink, and die, but to harness the truth of sex for higher means. At any time in a woman’s life, again not just in menopause, shifting her awareness to a tantric, mindful approach allows her to experience sex as a generative,

enlivening force, not as a depleting, painful, or obligatory act. Instead of creating life for another, she finds she can begin to generate more life for herself.

The tantric Making Love approach that we both practice and teach offers the possibility of a long and lasting love affair with your own body and with your lover (if you have one), allowing you to step into the realm of cultivating your own sensual vitality and inner presence. Tantric sex, sometimes called “slow sex,” is a beautiful bridge for a couple who are reaching their midlife years and starting to feel inevitable changes in their bodies. It’s a time when heartfelt negotiation and communication between man and woman is important. Man can be welcomed into the world of sensitive awareness and, if he is open, he can discover a whole field of love and relaxation—one that brings release from what potentially can be a deeply concerning and disheartening pressure of sexual performance. No longer does he need to be working so hard at sex, getting it right. Instead the body and the genitals can be the guides. This is a welcome relief for both men and women.

### ***Pain during Intercourse***

Pain is frequently experienced during sex by women of all ages. For a woman who has had pain in the past yet still gone ahead with sex, there may be lot of tension and resistance to sex built into the tissues of her vagina, and indeed her whole body and psyche. In more sensitive and informed sex, in a safe environment, a woman is given more time and space for a true opening and awakening in the body. Along with the use of natural lubricant (see chapter 8), it allows a woman to relax more deeply into herself. She has space to be with her body on the inside, and perhaps find herself accessing something that may have been lost along the way—her exquisite internal feminine energies. The fragrance of love can suddenly become released, set free while making slow, sensual love.

With the common complaint around menopause of never really feeling ready for sex and experiencing vaginal dryness and pain, a slower, more conscious style of lovemaking gives her body more time to warm up. She is able to bring more awareness to her breasts as the energy-raising pole in her body, allowing her to come to a place of -physical readiness, which in turn completely transforms her experience.

Often the cause of vaginal pain is threefold: First, a woman’s vagina at rest is not energetically ready to receive, the door is not yet truly open. Second, a man on entering into the vagina may push his penis into her body, with very little awareness in the penis itself, or of the way he is using it. His focus is more on “getting in there” as quickly as possible rather than on feeling his way gradually into the canal. This push makes the connection very physical, with no energy or awareness component, and thus is likely to cause pain. As soon as a man becomes more conscious of what he is doing and how, the ensuing slowness and sensitivity will relate to and communicate with the vaginal tissues, which in turn will relax and yield more easily. So in a high percentage of cases where there is pain, there is definitely a possibility to create a big shift in experience, as elaborated in chapters 8 and 9. The third cause of pain, as discussed in more detail in the next chapter, is lower levels of estrogen in the menopausal woman’s body that naturally cause a thinning of the vaginal walls, which makes them more sensitive to abrasion and discomfort.

Alternately, for the woman who has no problems or challenges moving into lovemaking during menopause, the pace of a slower style of sex opens her to sensual frontiers perhaps not previously felt. She finds her body is more joyful than ever and she freely allows and relaxes into pleasure.

### ***Friction in the Vagina***

For women who do suffer from pain during sex, a conscious approach also implies a need for less friction caused by excessive movement of the penis inside the vagina, which can be the cause of the pain in the

first place. Pain also disturbs the vagina generally, making it more contracted and narrow, whereas with relaxation and awareness, the cells of the vaginal wall and indeed the whole pelvic area have time to soften and expand, readying to invite and receive a penis that becomes a welcome guest, rather than an invader and inflictor of pain.

One woman shares her story:

*For the last ten years, my husband and I haven't had sex and our intimacy involved cuddling and mutual masturbation. We decided to attend the retreat and within three days I was having my husband's penis inside me comfortably—even feeling great—for the first time in over ten years. I now have a deeper relationship with my husband through having a new paradigm for approaching love, not just sex.*

### ***Expanding into Sensitivity***

As menopause can invite you to greater depth and more honesty as a woman, slowness in sex is also something you can integrate into your lovemaking at any stage. If you are already naturally sensitive and more attuned than most, being more conscious can help you become even more attuned. It's an ongoing circle of awareness and attunement. A tantric approach to lovemaking enables deep insights to be harvested in the psyche. Instead of being identified with the idea of aging, or of love outside of ourselves, it enables us to feel our bodies from the inside. There is a growing feeling that our bodies work perfectly in a beautiful, harmonious, divine way. It enables us to move through our days and open to pleasure freshly, using the senses as doorways. A menopausal body is pleading: Slow down! Be more receptive, more sensitive, more conscious!

Expanding into sensitivity heralds the sacredness of love, transformation, and a deep healing of earlier years in which life may have propelled us in unwanted directions. A shift in attitude can bring a newfound centering and trust in ourselves and our deepest body truths, which allow us to have more influence in sex—to steer it in the direction of love, presence, and awareness instead of being mechanical and focused on sensation rather than sensitivity.

Menopause is an individual quest or heroine's journey for each woman to find her own way armed with knowledge, information, and her intuition and deepened connection with her body. Then she can navigate her own path to power. But this is not "power over," it is a power within—one that can move mountains. This is the true power of woman. And this journey is not outward; it is an *inward* journey.

The menopause years invite a woman to become her own person—to leave the shackles of past identification of who she is, of her roles, and transform into an expression as unique and individual as she is, of presence and love. If a woman is on track she will grow increasingly more loving and more compassionate.

Like any journey, menopause changes you. It is an undeniable -gateway—a threshold. As the process is usually a gradual one, it's a slow unfolding, of initiation, of emerging. It is the grand walk into her elder years, "the second spring" as the Chinese refer to it. Menopause can potentially be a phase where a woman's sexual expression matures into something else, something deeper and more profound. There is no going back. This is the great power and potential of this incredible phase of your life.

## Biology

### *Harnessing Your Hormones*

MANY WOMEN KNOW VERY LITTLE ABOUT the hormones in our female bodies. It's actually quite complicated so it is no wonder, and it is not the purpose of this book to go into the intricate workings of our hormones. However, we will give a general overview of what happens, as it is extremely interesting. What we do know about menopause is that our menstrual cycle changes, but it does not only mean irregular menses. The fascinating thing is that menopause involves every system of our bodies—not only the intelligent endocrine system, that is, the system that produces and regulates hormones, but also the digestive system, immune system, and nervous system.

The term *menopause* is commonly used to describe any of the changes a woman experiences either just before or after she stops menstruating, marking the end of her reproductive period and fertility. It can take approximately a ten-year span of many shifts and changes in the body. It is found that 15 percent of women have biochemistry that deals with the changes easily, and they cruise through menopause with few or no symptoms. However, that leaves a huge 85 percent who experience some or all of the symptoms: hot flashes, night sweats, sleep disturbance, irregular or heavy menses, vaginal discomfort (itching, dryness, soreness, or pain), headaches, or loss of memory. And one of the prime symptoms, as discussed, is women's general disinterest in sex. And no wonder, with all of that going on!

Menopause can start anywhere from the mid-thirties up to age sixty, with the average age between forty-seven and fifty-two. It can also occur suddenly if a woman has had a hysterectomy—surgical removal of her womb, if it includes her ovaries—sending her into immediate menopause. Sudden menopause can also be precipitated by a shock to the body, either physical or emotional, such as a severe drop in weight or the death of a loved one. Essentially, menopause is activated when the ovaries no longer make estrogen and progesterone, two hormones needed for a woman's fertility, and a woman is generally referred to as officially being in menopause when her menstrual periods have ceased for one year. The time period immediately prior is known as perimenopause, meaning “around menopause.” Perimenopause starts with changes in the menstrual cycle—often this will be months of skipped periods punctuated by periods of excessive bleeding—so it's the actual time before menopause is reached. The average length of perimenopause is said to be about four years but can last anywhere from a few months to ten years.

Many women in their thirties and forties experience symptoms without even being aware of it. These may include fatigue, mood swings, depression and anxiety, unaccustomed irritability, and generally not feeling like yourself. Unless the ovaries have been surgically removed, estrogen levels do not diminish overnight; it's a gradual process. That's why many women may not even detect that they are in perimenopause, but simply think they are going a bit mad!

The hormonal system is so delicate that Leslie Kenton, author of *Passage to Power: Natural Menopause Revolution*, likens it to a never-ending symphony; as one “instrument” (hormone) comes to the fore, others recede into the background, the body always balancing and changing. A woman's estrogen and progesterone levels can change from one hour to the next and depend greatly on her thoughts, feelings, and emotions, as well as external events in her environment.

## Definitions

**Perimenopause** begins when hormonal changes in the body and menstrual cycle start to occur. It

continues until a woman's final menstrual period.

**Menopause** is the final menstrual cycle of a woman's life and signals the end of fertility. It is confirmed after twelve months with no menstruation.

**Postmenopause** is the time period after menopause.

As Kenton explains, the word *hormone* comes from a Greek word, *hormao*, which means "I excite." And this, she continues, is exactly what hormones do. "They are messenger chemicals made in minute quantities in the brain or in special endocrine glands, such as the thyroid, adrenals, pancreas, and ovaries—sometimes even in fat cells—and then carried in the bloodstream to distant parts of the body where they control, activate, and direct the ever-changing system and organ functions, urges, and feelings that are *you*."

Kenton goes on to say that each woman is biochemically and spiritually unique, noting that, "So central are hormonal events to how women think and feel that it would be no exaggeration to say the female endocrine system is an interface between body and spirit."\* The hormones estrogen and progesterone work in close communication with the female body's control centers, the pituitary (the "master" gland, a tiny gland in the base of your brain), and the hypothalamus, known as the master "switchboard" because it's the part of the brain that controls the endocrine system. There are many hormones, but it's the "steroid" hormones, such as cortisol, progesterone, DHEA, testosterone, and estrogen, that are most closely associated with sex and reproduction for women. These steroid hormones are derived from cholesterol and have a big influence on the way we feel.

## Hypothalamus

The hypothalamus is the control center. It balances and oversees biochemical and energetic changes throughout the body. The limbic system in which it sits is the most primitive part of the brain. It is the part that deals with the emotions and with our sense of smell, with our passions, and with all the unconscious interfaces that take place between mind and body. The actions of the limbic system lie beneath the level of the thinking mind. This is one of the reasons that the hypothalamus is often referred to as the "seat of the emotions." When excited the hypothalamus triggers desire—for food, for water, for adventure, for sex. Its actions can also be influenced by inhibitory thought patterns. If a woman is frightened about becoming pregnant, for instance, the fear itself—via the hypothalamus—can dampen sexual desire or even disrupt the menstrual cycle so she remains barren.

The hypothalamus even reacts to bodily changes that take place as a result of meditation. Its activities are also influenced by spiritual practices, which is a major reason why women who meditate regularly tend to develop greater emotional balance, as well as why repeated experiences of joy or stillness can dramatically improve various female complaints, such as PMS and hot flashes, in both menstruating and menopausal women.\*

\*Kenton, *Passage to Power*, 61.

Because the brain is involved, feedback from the endocrine system is altered, so any part of the body system—for example the digestive, nervous, or immune system—that is not working fully is going to affect every other part of the system. The response, in other words, will be holistic. As mentioned, biochemically all women are different. However, there are factors that increase a woman's susceptibility to the more unpleasant ravages of menopause. This may simply be genetics, but more often it is lifestyle choices: nutrition and health, level of self-care, and stress. Studies have shown that chronic, long-term stress can cause menopause-like symptoms due to increased cortisol levels. In addition, the menopause process itself, with its myriad of symptoms and discomfort, can also cause stress for some women.



## WHY THE BODY STARTS TO CHANGE

As mentioned, the hormonal system is complex, so we will provide a simple explanation here. Depending on factors of health, lifestyle, and genetics, sometime in a woman's thirties or forties her ovaries begin to slow their production of estrogen, which is the sexual and reproductive hormone. Estrogen controls a woman's monthly cycle. It enables a girl to develop into an adult woman, initiating the changes and growth of breasts as well as pubic and underarm hair, and heralds the beginning of menstruation. As estrogen controls the menstrual cycle, it is crucial to fertility. It also keeps cholesterol under control and helps protect bone health (as does progesterone). Estrogen is primarily produced in the ovaries, which produce the eggs. It's interesting to learn that the adrenal glands also produce some estrogen, as do our fat cells. Once created, estrogen is then transported to the body's tissues through our blood.

### ***Lower Estrogen Levels***

As menopause approaches, the ovaries begin to slow, causing lower levels of estrogen production. This results in symptoms such as irregular or absent periods, painful sex due to lack of vaginal lubrication, increase in urinary tract infections from thinning of the urethra, mood swings, headaches, difficulty concentrating, and fatigue.

### ***Stress, Increased Anxiety, Sleep Difficulties, Fatigue***

As estrogen levels begin to diminish, the reduced estrogen sends a biofeedback signal to the brain, which then starts scrambling for more estrogen from other parts of the body, thus affecting other organs. Since the ovaries are not sending their usual feedback of estrogen to the kidneys or the adrenal and thyroid glands, the lower reptilian brain, the survival brain, responds to a perception that the body is under stress. Now it produces more stress hormones, which make the heart rate increase, which causes palpitations. In response, the higher brain starts releasing stress hormones, with the adrenals pumping cortisol. This explains why women can feel nervous or have increased anxiety as menopause approaches, without any real explanation. "Like hot flashes, palpitations can range from mild to severe. They are rarely dangerous, though they can sometimes be very frightening. They are the result of the imbalance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, triggered by stress hormones, and are often related to fear and anxiety. If they persist, see your doctor."\*

When the higher brain releases stress hormones and the adrenals start pumping cortisol, constant stress prevents the cortisol levels from returning to normal. This can result in too much cortisol continuing to circulate in the body, thus increasing anxiety. Or there can be too little cortisol if the adrenal glands become chronically fatigued.

Many a modern Western woman's condition is adrenal fatigue. Throughout all this the liver is working overtime. It has the capacity to transform the "anti-aging" hormone DHEA, produced by the adrenal glands, into any hormone the body needs. (The one exception is progesterone, which is a precursor to DHEA. That's why it is called the "mother hormone," which we will explain soon.) DHEA is a hormone that functions as a precursor to the male and female sex hormones, estrogen and testosterone, all needed to maintain vital healthy body function. DHEA production peaks in the mid-twenties, and the body's natural levels of sex hormones drop after that time. But when the body is producing a lot of stress hormone, it produces less DHEA, which obviously then lowers the sex response, due to the drop in sex hormones.

### ***Stress Depletes Progesterone***

All of this combined with the increased stress hormones affects the ability of the body to relax, unwind, and go to sleep at night. Therefore the menopausal woman is not getting restorative sleep, or she awakens at 3 a.m., unable to return to sleep, and is then exhausted the next day. And so it continues in a vicious cycle. Women who fall prey to this cycle are at risk of spiraling in a downward direction. However, the body is actually designed to regulate itself, and often it will rebound if we give it a little help.

On the upside, many women have reported that the wee morning hours have become their most creative time if they get up and start writing or do some other creative activity. In traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), 3 to 5 a.m. is the “lung time.” The lung is responsible for moving *qi* (energy) throughout the body, and helps with the immune function. The lung is also associated with the heart—grief, sadness, regret, or anything weighing heavily on the heart may emerge at this time. It’s good to recognize and honor such feelings as they arise.

### ***Too Much Estrogen***

The reduction in progesterone in perimenopause and menopause can cause an estrogen dominance. Symptoms of estrogen dominance include headaches, anger and irritability, breast tenderness, hot flashes, weight gain, depression, mood swings, irregular cycles, heavy bleeding, painful periods, bloating, high blood pressure, and breast tumor formation, just to name a few. Many women are suffering difficult menopause due to this imbalance, possibly aggravated by lifestyle and environmental factors that are now pointing to an oversupply of estrogen in our bodies.

Use of chemicals and hormones in food production, which go into the food we consume, as well as contamination of the water we drink by prescription drugs, including estrogen from the Pill and HRT, can affect the delicate human endocrine system. Exacerbating the problem are common phenomena frequently occurring in most of our lives: overheated nonstick cookware leeches endocrine-disrupting chemicals into food. Off-gassing flame-retardants, anything from construction material to carpets, furniture, paint, and household goods, release similar types of chemicals into the environment. Heat causes chemical reactions in plastic water bottles and containers that also leech into food and water. All of these, including common household cleaners and personal care products, can potentially cause imbalances in the human body and are particularly disruptive for women.

The good news is that the body has an amazing capacity to heal and reverse symptoms when given the chance, and when supported in the right way by being mindful of eliminating these risk factors in your life and supporting your body to heal and return to balance.

### ***Progesterone—It’s Vitaly Important***

One powerful way to balance estrogen is with adequate amounts of progesterone. Progesterone has been around for 500 million years. It has been found in all vertebrates—fishes, reptiles, birds, and mammals, which include humans—and is essential for life. Researchers have found that many ailments and diseases can be remedied by adequate progesterone in the body.

As the ovaries stop ovulating, they stop producing progesterone. A cycle in which a woman is not ovulating can happen at any time in her life, but women often begin to skip ovulating by their mid-thirties. Estrogen can drop by about 35 percent when a woman enters menopause, but progesterone can plummet up to 95 percent or more. Because it affects how she feels, this loss can leave a woman feeling quite compromised, if not completely sideswiped by the more negative and troubling symptoms.

For women who suffer from the common complaints of depression, anxiety, hot flashes, weight gain, and so forth, progesterone could be a game changer. Progesterone has a soothing effect on the body and is a natural antidepressant, which makes it vitally important for women moving through menopause. It promotes good sleep and can soothe edginess, anxiety, and panic. It is an essential raw material for life and is a precursor hormone, meaning it has the ability to be turned into other hormones, such as testosterone and estrogen, among others. Therefore, it is referred to as the “mother hormone.” It protects against the negative effects of estrogen dominance, as described above. It can also bring surges of libido. We can see the effects of higher progesterone in a healthy woman in her third trimester of pregnancy; she is glowing, happy, and positive.

Progesterone is imperative for healthy bones and helps prevent osteoporosis. While estrogen prevents bone breakdown, it is progesterone that actually promotes bone building. It encourages fat burning instead of the tendency of estrogen to increase body fat, can help guard against breast cancer or cancer of the womb, and reduces blood clotting; thus it is an important factor in cardiac health for women.

Primarily made in the ovaries, progesterone is also made in the adrenal glands and can be converted into cortisol. Since stress fires off the fight-or-flight signal to the brain, it can cause excessive cortisol, which lowers progesterone levels. Large meals can also deplete progesterone levels, so smaller meals and avoiding eating too late at night will help you sleep better.

## HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY

Hormonal balancing is a very complex and individual issue. There are plenty of options ranging from traditional Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) to bioidentical hormones, and many natural herbal remedies and nutritional supplements, including those used by TCM (traditional Chinese medicine) and traditional herbal medicine. Many women have experienced great relief from perimenopausal, menopausal, postmenopausal, and indeed premenstrual symptoms using these supports. It is worth researching more about the natural ways to balance hormones if you’re having trouble with symptoms, as each woman is unique.

Currently, the safety of over-the-counter hormone products (traditional HRT) is deeply questioned by some medical doctors who prefer to prescribe FDA-approved bioidentical hormones. This is largely due to the hazardous effects on women through the 1980s and ’90s when HRT was composed of unopposed estrogen—that is, estrogen not partnered with progesterone or progestin, resulting in an increase in breast cancers and cardiac problems.

### ***Bioidentical Hormones***

Bioidentical hormones have been synthesized from plant sources and their molecular structure is identical to that of hormones in the human body. Doctors who are trained in the use of bioidentical hormones will test your hormone levels and may write a specific prescription for replacement of whatever hormone is deficient, such as progesterone, estrogen, DHEA, or testosterone. This can be made up by a compounding pharmacist that is a state-licensed pharmacist using FDA-approved bioidentical hormones.

The late John Lee, M.D., a pioneer in the research of bioidentical hormones, found that progesterone is so important as the precursor of all other hormones that the only thing women may need is to supplement with a high-quality bioidentical progesterone cream or tablets. Included in his protocol are specific nutritional supplements, regular gentle exercise, and good nutrition. Leslie Kenton has recorded his research in her book *Passage to Power*.

Dr. Northrup gives a very good analysis of bioidentical hormones and the importance of progesterone in *The*

*Wisdom of Menopause.* See the back of this book for resources. It must be noted that a safe -bioidentical alternative may be to supplement with a high-quality -bioidentical progesterone cream produced by a good compounding pharmacist. Many women also report that wild yam cream works wonders to relieve their symptoms.

The biggest indicator of what is or isn't working is how you are feeling. If you are on progesterone and feel good, keep taking what you have been taking. If you do not, see your doctor. It's possible you may need another alternative, but in general, many women do seem to feel better on progesterone.

### ***A Holistic Approach***

Chinese medicine also offers a sound holistic approach to balancing the female system and has been used successfully for thousands of years. An experienced TCM practitioner can diagnose a woman's state of health and treat accordingly with acupuncture and effective herbal medicines. Others may prefer an Ayurvedic approach. As previously mentioned, every woman's body is unique and will respond differently to treatment, so it's wise to research and experiment. Ultimately intuition and a sense of well-being will reveal what works and feels best for your body.

### **Open the *Chi* Channels**

In traditional Chinese medicine the kidneys are the source of our spirit (*shen*) and our life-force energy (*chi*). If they are compromised, the life-force energy stagnates and cannot flow to other areas of the body. Acupuncture opens the body's meridians and helps the energy channels to flow. Practices such as yoga, t'ai chi, and chi kung are also beneficial for moving stagnation.

### ***Notice Your Feelings***

Something that we and other women we know have noticed is that if you reflect on the split second *before* a hot flash, it is often associated with a thought or feeling that has arisen even before being conscious of it. Sometimes anger or fear or sadness—some kind of strong -emotion—can trigger the sudden onset of a hot flash, which shows how closely associated our feelings are to our hormonal system. Note also what foods you have eaten prior to having these sudden rises of heat in your body and you might find that your body is telling you what exacerbates them and what might appease them.

### ***Hot Flashes and the Liver***

Cleansing the liver is very helpful for menopause.

One woman shares her experience with liver detox:

*I thought I was going crazy. My emotions were all over the place. I went from loving mother to screaming banshee. I was desperate and ended up at a naturopath seeking any kind of help. She immediately put me onto a liver detox and herbs, and I have never looked back. Within a short period of time, all my symptoms, including hot flashes, reduced substantially. I felt like my old self again.*

## THE RESTORATIVE POWER OF LOVEMAKING

If the negative effects of stress and lifestyle have a lot to do with how a woman moves through menopause, any change that balances the whole system, such as meditation, yoga, t'ai chi, or a more relaxed style of lovemaking, holds an essential key for contemporary women. Making love in relaxation soothes and calms

the nervous system of the perimenopausal and menopausal woman in a beautiful and natural way. One of the keys to creating this relaxed state in lovemaking may be familiar to mindfulness practitioners—simply bringing awareness to the present. When one is fully present to the immediate moment, all thoughts of past and future become peripheral or vanish. This has been the ultimate aim of all meditation practice: being in the present moment. By this definition, making love moment by moment can itself be a meditation.

Changing the way we make love challenges our past ideas of conventional sex and leads us into a world of wonder where deep healing and restoration of the body and spirit is possible. If we keep relaxation as a staple, a constant, in our approach to making love, then we start to open our minds and hearts to a more inner experience of sex. Because a woman's ability to relax has a vast influence on her hormonal balance, it goes without saying that making love in a relaxed manner can indeed help to balance a woman's overall health.

Conscious, slow sex and making love in relaxation generate a restorative effect in the parasympathetic nervous system, the rest-and-digest response, which is part of the greater autonomic nervous system responsible for involuntary functions in the body. Once the body is restored to balance it can usually make enough DHEA, the youth-rejuvenating hormone, on its own. Studies show that after one month of using the HeartMath system,\* which is basically breathing in and out of your heart center with positive thoughts, DHEA levels increase dramatically and levels of cortisol reduce significantly. This has a positive effect on the whole functioning of the body.

Therefore directing awareness and intention to the breasts during lovemaking, as we will expand on in chapter 7, naturally activates and engages the heart, which then involves the whole body. By activating the healing power of the parasympathetic nervous system, one can extrapolate that it may automatically increase DHEA levels, therefore balancing and healing the whole endocrine system. This naturally restores harmony in the body's systems, and we have repeatedly found, both in our own experiences and those reported by others, that making love in awareness and relaxation also positively balances a woman's fluctuating emotional states, and therefore her hormones.

Hopefully you now understand the importance of hormones, especially for women who suffer in any way or have suffered during the menstrual years. The balance of estrogen and progesterone in particular can have a major life impact. For the woman who is feeling great, there's no need to change anything. But for the woman who's not, it's important to remember the holistic approach: preventive lifestyle and nutritional choices, stress, emotional health, the state of relationships, and the surrounding environment and environmental toxins all have an influence. Most important, every woman should do more of what makes her happy! Whatever supports the amazing hormones and allows a woman to ride the wave of menopause with ease will be of tremendous benefit.

- *Recommended Restorative Yoga Positions*

Yoga offers much for a woman of any age to help balance the endocrine system. The following *asanas*, or poses, are particularly good for replenishment and for pacifying the adrenal glands. All the yoga poses in this book can be used as a gentle sequence or as stand-alone postures.

#### *Wide-Legged Supported Child Pose*

*(Balasana)*

Forward bend is very soothing for the adrenal glands and calms all systems of the body. Turn your head to each side to balance out the neck. It's worth investing in a bolster to support your menopause journey (can be bought from any yoga supply outlet). Try adapting this with a chair if you have trouble with knees or hips.

### *Reclining Supported Simple Cross-Legged Pose*

*(Supta Sukhasana)*

This pose promotes a calm mind and is soothing for the whole system. It creates spaciousness in the belly and opens the heart and chest. It also increases blood supply to the pelvis, bathing and bringing nourishment to the reproductive organs.

Note: *Not to be done while menstruating.* It can help with mood swings and can relieve menstrual cramping when done *only* around the time of ovulation.

### *Corpse Pose*

*(Savasana)*

This pose helps relieve anxiety, nervous tension, and hot flashes, and is deeply replenishing. Placing your hands on your lower belly, breathe slowly into your abdomen three times, feeling your lower abdomen lifting and lowering your hands with the rise and fall of your breath. Then place your hands over your ribs at each side of your chest. Practice upper-body or thoracic breathing slowly three times, feeling your hands moving in and out with each breath. Then relax completely.

When you have practiced this a few times, you may find there is no need to place your hands on your body. Simply let them lie relaxed at your sides as you start with the breathing each time. And then proceed with relaxation. This will help bring equilibrium to your nervous system and calm you. Stay in this pose for at least five minutes.

AS EACH WOMAN'S JOURNEY THROUGH menopause is individual, it is impossible to make all-embracing statements about it because so many threads weave into the fabric of personal experience, including culture, genetics, lifestyle, attitude, and life story. At the same time women share in common many highly significant aspects of menopause. This means that a lot of information can be passed on to make the passage easier and empower women, whether they are in a partnership or on their own. Being offered an alternative perspective on female sexuality establishes an increased level of self-understanding and self-trust. So as unique as women's experience may be, the journey is also a universal one, and menopause is inevitable for all women who live beyond their childbearing years.

Even so, as natural an unfolding as this process is, if not encouraged otherwise, women can tend to have tremendous despondency with regard to aging, sex, and menopause. Many women feel themselves to be deficient or lacking in something, and frequently experience a very low sense of self-worth, as if they are no longer "seen." Many women report that they actually feel sexually "broken." Unfortunately much of this despondency is simply due to not having access to important information about male and female sexual energies, their differences, and the way they complement each other at a fundamental level—a level that supports a woman's body and her innate sexual design.

Those women who transit menopause with great ease may nonetheless yearn for more depth and connection in their sexual relationships. Some women enjoy a new freedom in their sexual aliveness, liberated from monthly bleeding cycles, yet seem to have trouble finding men who can meet them on a deeper level in this newfound awakening. Whatever category a woman falls into, there is a drive in the modern woman to have more and to be more. Although there is nothing wrong with such longings per se, actively striving for them can ultimately divert a woman from her essential nature, making it more likely that she feels disoriented. The answer may lie in a new level of inner -anchoring and inner perception that lies deep within her.

### TRUST YOUR OWN BODY

In the coming chapters we endeavor to explain and share with you the possibility of how your attitude to your body, and your understanding of female sexuality, can transform you and awaken what is available to you at this inherently exciting and rich time of your life. We explore the power that this time of change represents for a woman, and what's possible when she turns her awareness inward to her own inner life. Women who participate in our retreats often give us feedback after a few days, saying, "I knew this information all along but I did not trust it," as if the notion were something already hidden within their bodies, within their very genetics.

What occludes this knowing and disturbs the trust in our bodies? Basically it's our sexual conditioning, as explained previously, as well as our general lack of body awareness as humans. We are more in our minds and in mechanical thinking mode than in our bodies and feeling, sensing mode. The way we have made love for centuries has been without attention to the intrinsic energetic qualities of male and female polarities, and with little thought of the holistic and healing potential of sex, beyond its reproduction function. Basically we have lost connection to, and faith in, our own bodies, lost the capacity to listen, follow, and flow with its many impulses, messages, and signals.

## INTRODUCING TANTRA

Tantra has become increasingly popular in recent years. However, there are different levels, interpretations, and associations that can potentially cause confusion. The word itself derives from India's ancient Sanskrit language and means "expansion of energy, expansion of consciousness, web of consciousness." For us, Tantra is essentially this: the ancient art of awareness (mindfulness) applied to the self and to the body in daily life as well as in sex, which ideally is part of daily life. In Tantra sex is not practiced for its own sake, as indulgence or entertainment, but as an instrument for going *beyond* sex, for reaching health, balance, improved couple relationships, self-control, and eventually superior states of consciousness. The tantric practice of sexual reabsorption allows for the conversion and elevation of the huge sexual potential, producing rapid and beneficial transformation of the human being. And this exploration begins with accessing the innate "magnetic" intelligence anchored in our hearts and genitals.

Awareness directed into the body creates expansion rather than contraction, and requires being conscious moment by moment rather than mechanically repeating patterns. The miracle of awareness (or mindfulness) is that it has the power to transform life, dramatically improve its quality, and increase self-love and joy. Tantric awareness amplifies sensuality and can be brought into play at any time of the day (or night!), either with a partner or independent of a partner. And this moment-to-moment awareness is especially powerful when incorporated into lovemaking.

### ***Equal and Opposite Poles***

The essence of tantric knowledge is that each individual forms a complete "magnetic unit." The body carries two equal and opposite energy poles: one in the heart/chest area, and one in the genital area. One pole is male, which is inherently dynamic, or "positive," and has the power to raise energy and awaken vitality. It's important to note that the word "dynamic" in this context does not mean active or refer to activity. Dynamic means there is an inherent capacity to flow that occurs without actively doing anything; it arises of its own accord and comes into play when an environment conducive to its response is created. At times this may happen spontaneously, but it is possible through awareness to consciously create the situation.

The corresponding female pole is inherently receptive, or "negative," with the power to absorb, to take in, to receive. Here again it's important to note that "receptive" in this context does not mean passive or unengaged. It means to be fully present, yet non-doing. And these two powers—dynamic and receptive—are equal forces, while at the same time they are opposite forces that complement each other and work in unison as a single unit, as two parts of one whole.

In the last few decades the truth that each individual carries both male and female chromosomes has been scientifically established. However, Tantra's understanding of these complementary aspects dates back more than ten thousand years.

### ***Rod of Magnetism***

The presence of these two equal and opposite internal forces forms a very important biomagnetism that gives rise to a kind of inner magnet. This "rod of magnetism" enables energy and vitality to circulate and stream throughout the body. Effectively, we are all able to circulate sexual/life/chi energy within ourselves, and independent of a partner. Internally this self-sustaining magnetic energy circulates through the body and connects the positive and negative poles. Tuning in to this fine, delicate, and subtle level of inner reality enables every individual to self-nourish and replenish, independent of sex. Basically we are designed in an auto-ecstatic way, meaning each individual has the capacity to circulate blissful energies within, which ironically is



considered the highest or most evolved form of sex. It is so helpful for women who are transiting menopause with or without partners to understand their bodies as a resource that can bring a lot of joy and happiness.

Engaging with self in this auto-ecstatic way can lead to heightened states in which an expansion of energy is experienced through the magnetic field that surrounds the body. When the awareness expands beyond the physical body, orgasmic or blissful or ecstatic states can occur in which peace and harmony prevail, where time dissolves in pure presence, as if embraced by the arms of the universe. Such experiences are highly revitalizing, energizing, uplifting, and unforgettable. Whether alone or with a partner, we melt and merge with our own bodies.

Even for those with a partner, ultimately the vitality is circulating within each individual, independent of the other person. This view certainly creates more independence, especially for someone who may be thinking it's about having a significant other.

Reader Suzanna shares her awakening:

*A few years back I had lost all interest in sex. I felt completely broken as a woman. Yet deep down inside, there was a kind, soft voice telling me I was not broken and there was nothing wrong with me, I just needed to find the key to unlocking my inner fire. Then life as I knew it began to implode as my marriage came apart at the seams. To cope with the stress I started to meditate, which is to say I sat still in silence for about fifteen minutes a day listening for that internal kind, soft, guiding voice. During a meditation one night I entered a state of orgasmic bliss that lasted what seemed like an impossibly long time. It was a total game-changer. I suddenly understood that there was something really powerful I could tap into inside, and that sexual pleasure was more about my own inner vitality than about the activities we do together with our bodies. I found your book, *Tantric Orgasm for Women*,\* shortly after my initial awakening and it was a beacon of light on my lonely journey. The information you presented and the way you presented it really spoke to me and helped me move through some limiting beliefs surrounding my sexual potential. I finally felt someone was explaining the unfulfilled sexual experience I'd had all my adult life.*

### ***Poles Reversed in Male and Female Bodies***

One of the magnetic poles is in the chest/heart area and the other pole is in the genitals. The dynamic “plus” pole is the life-giving, energy-raising positive pole from which aliveness flows to the equal and opposite receptive “minus” pole, at least in its initial stages. It must be noted here that *plus* and *minus* are figurative terms and do not imply that one is more or better than the other. In women it is obvious that the breasts are the positive energy-raising or life-giving/sustaining pole. In the male body it's equally obvious that the life-giving pole is in the penis/-testicles. Conversely, a man's receptive pole is in the heart/chest area, and a woman's receptive pole is the vagina.

### ***Women's Energy-Raising Pole***

Energy and vitality is “raised” from a plus pole, and not from a minus pole. However, in the usual approach to sex, a woman's vagina, and especially the clitoris, is conventionally considered to be the center of female sexuality. Yes, it's true in the sense that the clitoris is sensitive and creates intensity and excitement, but this is not the way a woman's body opens deeply, not where her deeper, more subtle sexual energy is raised, and not how her body awakens according to a deeper magnetic design. This completely contradicts current views about the clitoris, and only firsthand experience will lead you to question this belief.

The deeper opening of a woman's body happens via the breasts and nipples, and then, *given the time*, will

be felt as a vibrational resonance or response that opens the vagina and makes the tissues receptive. Engaging a woman's body on this energetic level brings her to a true willingness, where she no longer submits to sex but participates fully.

### ***Sexual Temperature***

It's very important to understand that because the awakening happens in the upper body, time is naturally required for a melting into the breasts and the flow and spreading of vitality to the lower body. When this occurs, there is a deep yes to receiving; a woman longs to have the man enter her, to take him inside her. Because of the lack of time and understanding in conventional sex, with the focus on the clitoris, a woman's body seldom opens to its full potential, and thus begins the process of a gradual physical closing down. A woman's loss of interest (after the sexual intensity of the honeymoon phase) is often mistakenly interpreted as frigidity, or being blocked in some way, physically or psychologically. The woman, too, thinks there is something really wrong with her because she can't open up and be ready for sex instantly.

When a woman's body is honored as it is designed by nature—understanding that her body opens differently from a man's and her -sexual temperature rises much more slowly than his—then the woman is totally and absolutely happy to make love, her interest returns, and she begins to shine with love. Countless times we have witnessed this during our couples' retreats. From a starting point of feeling disconnected from a partner, and sometimes not having made love for years, within three days of exploring new sexual territory using new guidelines, there is a huge shift from disinterest to being fully engaged and enthusiastic. What this reveals is that it is not sex per se that is the problem, it's more about how we usually go about having sex.

Figure 3.2 on page 40 shows how the inner magnets of man and woman correspond and fit together because opposite poles are meeting: man's positive lower body pole meets woman's positive upper body pole.

So for example, when man and woman stand opposite each other, effectively they are like two magnets meeting at opposite ends, and the magnets exert a force on each other. So additionally, beyond the individual inner magnetic set up, there is the potential for a circular path and flow and exchange of energy between male and female -bodies, as well as an expansion of the magnetic field surrounding the bodies.

While the figure shows the correspondence of male and female bodies, it is the accessing of inner aliveness as an individual that has priority, and this means that subtle flows and exchanges of energy can also be experienced between female-female bodies and male-male bodies.

### ***Female Body in Its Totality Is Receptive***

It helps to understand that as women, even though inwardly we contain both male/dynamic and female/receptive forces, outwardly on a global body energy level we are female, receptive, and absorbing. And the same is true for men. Inwardly both forces are present, yet, outwardly a man's body energy has a dynamic, flowing, moving quality.

Beginning to understand the receptive powers of her own unique composition and responding to the dynamic force of male flowing toward her or within her or through her opens new doors for a woman. And as already mentioned, it's vital to understand that receptivity is not something to be done and it's not passive and inert; receiving is the intrinsic capacity to take in and absorb, to become a passage. And receptivity is a very powerful force.

### ***It's All Within You***

The discovery of the subtle level of magnetic aliveness lying within holds a vital key to the menopausal woman's journey. Once a woman understands her inner design and then actually experiences it within her own self (alone or with another), the menopausal woman, and in fact every woman, whatever age she is, can become liberated on an inner level, which then affects how she moves into the world.

For women who are experiencing menopause at present, what it means is this: there is nowhere you need to go to seek what you are yearning for, for it is already here, anchored right in your very own body. For many years in our Making Love Retreats, over and over we have seen women break down in tears from the relief at hearing this foundational interpretation of Tantra. They realize that they simply are not broken or deficient, and that their disinterest in sex is not to do with their bodies—they are not congested or uptight. They are just different! The way the female body opens and readies itself for sex is very, very different from the way the male body opens. And there is certainly a style of sex that is well suited to woman's body energy and her hormonal changes; however, it is different from the accepted style of conventional or traditional sex.

A retreat participant shares her experiences:

*I am an acupuncturist and specialize in menopause. After I experienced several years of postmenopausal vaginal dryness and low sex drive, my husband and I decided to attend the Making Love retreat. I had low expectations that anything would change . . . to me it seemed like my vagina was damaged beyond repair. I was extremely pleasantly surprised that I quickly opened like a flower when I understood that the female body requires a longer time to warm up than a male body, and that for women the breasts are the energy-awakening pole in the body. As a result, my vaginal tissues have regenerated and I am eager for intimacy. I can feel energy pulsing throughout my body and opening my heart. Making love has become so yummy and revitalizing!!!! I am so surprised at how quickly this has happened!!!!*

### ***Impact of Sexual Conditioning***

Sex as we know it has been informed and impacted by our sexual -conditioning. The imprints of all the misunderstandings about sex that we inherit from our society on an unconscious level start from our earliest years. These sexual patterns and imprints have distracted all of us from our true natures. Of course logically we know that women's bodies and men's bodies are different, but it's the actual way sexual energy arises in the female body, and how that life force moves through and prepares our bodies, that holds the key.

### ***Invert Attention***

It is common in our society to be immensely busy directing our energy outward, away from our center. We are tremendously outwardly focused on plans, on getting ahead, on getting results, on setting up and reaching our goals. Similarly, the style in which we make love conventionally goes in this direction too. We are more focused on the other than on ourselves, more outside of our bodies than inside of our bodies. And in sex, we are often more focused on a climax, which usually marks the end of sex, than being present and letting things be and unfold.

In place of the habitual outward movement of attention and energy, we make suggestions throughout this book to replace it with the opposite, with an inversion of your attention to inside the body as an anchor point for your awareness. Internally this attitude and level of mindfulness can indefinitely and substantially nourish you at this important time of your life and as you advance into your later years. With the understanding that there is nowhere you need to go to seek what you are yearning for, a new sense of self-worth can start to fill you up and flow through your body. Tuning in to the subtle aliveness, ever present within you, is like having a light

suddenly switched to the “on” -position. We see women (within a couple of days) start to blossom like the delicate, yet strong and beautiful, flowers they truly are. Metaphorically speaking, they appear to grow quite rapidly from seedling to flower in grace and confidence.

## YOUR BODY IS PERFECT AS IT IS

If you have felt, or feel, as if you are broken, that your body doesn't work anymore, that it doesn't work as well as it used to when you had raging hormones in your younger years, we are here to reassure you quite loudly that it does! And it works perfectly and beautifully, just differently. Through the explanation we give, you will come to know that clearly. You're not broken. You are simply going through a natural change, a natural phase of womanhood, and potentially one of the most powerful times of your life. There's just less drive in a woman's body to reproduce now that the hormones are not running around frantically looking to mate.

Women interpret that as being deficient. It's simply hormones changing the biological response, but there is a far greater power that can come with this period of life. A quieter and more inward silence is available now, and there's a different type of power in that. Ease and grace replace headiness and the intoxicating flood of revved-up reproductive hormones. The natural potential within the body and heart are alive right now. It is simply a matter of shifting your perspective to a more inner experiencing. Nature's arrangement of our hormones to create life is now moved to a level that allows our bodies to give birth to another kind of life, a life more of our choosing, of our own calling.

Women's problems during menopause and difficulties with having sex are seen as pathology in this modern age. We want to remove it from the pathological arena and raise it into the realm of health and well-being. And that requires a shift in attention, to look to what is innately healthy and alive in the body, instead of what “appears” wrong. This creates space for a shift in the psyche, and the inherent health of the body will follow.

### *An Energy Body, First and Foremost*

What gives our bodies life is the life force, or chi. This is the energy body, albeit invisible. When we can reroute our attention inward, anchor and reference ourselves from inside rather than seeing ourselves from the outside (how we look, what we do for a living, whether we have a mate or not), there is new ground available to us as women. When our minds live only in the realm of the physical and the external, we forget the energetic reality of the body and its innate and holy potential, its capacity and intrinsic thrust to come into balance and wholeness. When the appropriate environment is created for the body to open at a deeper level, no matter what age, open it will.

#### • *Resting in Consciousness*

The aligned position for resting in consciousness is perhaps the most delightful and beneficial practice an individual can do (if you have a partner or not) on a regular or even daily basis. It is highly recommended because the awareness is turned inward and brings you and your body into focus. The practice needs a minimum of twenty to thirty minutes and is as simple as this:

Lie down, close your eyes, and bring your awareness within your body. It's important to lie with the spine, head, and neck in a straight line. You may need a flat pillow to support your head, but be sure that your head is not tilted upward. Alignment is crucial as it contributes tremendously to the level of your presence.

Place a pillow beneath the knees to support them, so they are slightly softened and curved, which will greatly enhance your capacity to enter into the body and relax.

If possible, turn your feet slightly inward rather than letting them fall outward in a V-shape; this also helps to connect to the lower body, which is so often out of our awareness.

Place your hands on your belly as shown in figure 3.3 on page 46, or you can put them on your groin area, or wrap them around the sides of your thighs.

When you are comfortable, turn your attention from outside to inside, leaving behind the thoughts of the day. Sweep through your whole body with the awareness, softening and relaxing any tension that you notice.

It can help to contract and tighten the body at first, exaggerating the tension and releasing it. Do this several times, contracting and relaxing. Sense the upper half of the body and then the lower half of the body, and unite them by holding your attention in the area above the navel, the solar plexus.

Slowly sink into the sensations of the body, looking inward and downward with your inner eye. Spread your attention evenly throughout your entire body, always keeping the head and neck in one line. Breathe deeply and slowly into the belly, and just “be.” Give value to any subtle feelings of aliveness in your body, and don’t look for great things!

This very specific body position will help you to sink inward and, after some time, enable your consciousness to move beyond the body’s physical boundaries. When a union with the subtle energies in the body is achieved, time melts away, we become fully present to the moment, and inner contentment and fulfillment arise. We feel filled up from within, and fully refreshed and energized. (And we don’t regret it so much if there’s an empty space in the bed next to us!)