

Tara Galeando

Tara, welcome to the show. I am so happy to have you with me today. Thank you very much, Emily.

So Tara, I usually like to begin by getting a little bit of information about how you got into the field and focused on embodiment and sensuality specifically. Yeah, so when I decided to go to graduate school, I knew that I wanted to study at a contemplative university. So I went to Naropa and in that program, which was absolutely fantastic, I actually had zero classes on human sexuality.

And when I graduated, I started a private practice and everybody wanted to talk about sex and sexuality and sexual preferences and their relationships. And I had no background, no experience, no professional credentials. All I had most was my own personal experience. And so then I went in a little bit deeper and got certified as a sexologist and then eventually got certified as a sex therapist, which was somewhat of an arduous and rigorous process. And then looking at my clients, it was really an amazing opportunity because I wanted to be able to serve them better. I was really just responding to their requests and noticing that if they were feeling comfortable enough to speak with me around such a intimate topic, then I should be up to speed to be able to meet them.

So that's how it began for me. Yeah, and it always amazes me how many programs are lacking any information about sexuality programs. I mean, sexuality coursework, you know, there's obviously like general psychology programs and I can kind of see maybe how those sorts of programs would get away with it.

But then there's like a ton of marriage and family therapy programs that have not a single course on sexuality. And really, I think any kind of program needs to have some information and training on sexuality because I always say is you can't separate your sexuality from your individuality. It's so intrinsically wound up in who we are and you learn so much about a person's psyche, I think by asking questions about their sexuality.

And then of course, if you're working with couples, you know, it's bound to come up at some point. So I love when I hear people who realize that there's a need for it, and then take the initiative to get themselves educated and trained. So, very nice. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, and I am amazed as well, that there are people who are doing couples therapy who are not, yeah, educated in that realm. And so, yeah, I am a couples therapist, I am a certified sex therapist.

And I think that it's essential to be speaking about how couples are relating with each other in a sensual, sexual way. Totally. So you use the word sensual, and I think we need to dive into that word because it is so important as it relates to sexuality.

And I think that especially this day and age, it's something that so many people struggle with. I, you know, I don't know about you, but I have my clients constantly complaining about an inability to focus or get in touch with their bodies. They don't feel present.

And that's really what your book is about, rediscovering my body. And so I'd love to hear a little bit more on some of your thoughts about that and what your take is on sensuality. And if you could break that down for our listeners, I think that'd be great.

Yeah, absolutely. And so my understanding is that we live in a Cartesian society where it's, I think, therefore I am. And that there is such an emphasis on materialism and how we receive accolades is through the production of work.

And that work is always tangible and based on our cognition. And so the opportunity is to really be devoid of the body, like why even dive into it? So to tap into the knowing of the body really is a different perspective, a different wisdom, a different way of perceiving the world. And for me, it's profoundly rich.

And it's really where we begin this journey on this 3D plane as infants, as babies, being so much in our bodies, not really being so much in the cognitions. And that's where I like to bring people back to. So it really is this rediscovering process of coming back to the body in a sensual way, really coming back to our senses.

I couldn't agree with you more. I do a lot of writing myself on this topic. And what I always remind people is this is not about creating something that doesn't exist or that you're not capable of, because to your point, we are born fully embodied.

We understand the world completely through the five senses when we're infants and babies and we're exploring through our sensations. And there comes a time, I think, where that stops. And especially given the modern world and technology, I think we are more cut off from our bodies than ever before.

What is your advice to people about how to begin journeying back into their bodies? Well, I believe that it is actually deceptively simple and that the opportunity to be in the body is really just to bring awareness to the moment. So in this moment, what is it that I'm noticing in my body? And so I might begin with a simple body scan by perceiving the top of my head and then slowly going down to my toes and then seeing what sensations in my body grab my attention. It doesn't need to be major.

And actually it could be quite subtle if I have the perspective to see that. But I can notice maybe there's a little bit of pain in my right hip and just feeling that. And then just taking a moment to be with it because oftentimes what I find is that to actually be with that discomfort or be with that sensation in the body is not one that we're familiar with.

So we often bypass it and ignore it. And that's actually the wonderful opportunity of being in the body is to actually be with those sensations. So it's not rocket science.

It really is something pretty simple and basic and mundane. And when we can bring our attention to those sensations on a regular basis, then when we're in a heightened state of arousal, like sex or like when we're being angry or some other intense emotion, then we're actually able to hold onto those senses with more capacity and skill and experience a lot more than we've ever imagined. Yeah.

And I always tell people how important it is to begin this process before they're ever in the bedroom. Cause I'm like, if you're not in touch with your body throughout the day, how can you expect to go from zero to 60 once you jump into bed with another person? It's just not gonna happen. And I think that's part of the reason why people struggle so much to get in touch with their body and to experience sex as their body because they're so disconnected from it throughout the rest of the day.

And so I love what you're saying about starting these exercises just with that kind of head to toe body scan and checking in. I think even if people do things like this a few minutes before they're gonna be sexual with another person, it doesn't, like you said, take that much to re-inhabit the body in a way that can be really transformational. I agree.

Yeah. And I like the simple practices because then for me, it's more sustainable. It's like, okay, I don't have to change my whole life but I can do this in a few moments and it's kind of easy. Totally, totally. How do you differentiate between mindfulness and embodiment? Yeah.

So for me, mindfulness is really about the focused attention on the thought patterns. And then being in the body is actually a more open, diffuse experience where there's more awareness of the sensations of the body. And so the way that we perceive the sensations in the body is actually a little bit different than the mindfulness. And that I like mindfulness as a practice and I think that it's beneficial. And then it also reinforces the dominance of the mind. And I don't necessarily feel like that is why people are coming to me. Yeah, I agree.

I feel like for someone who's just getting started, mindfulness is like a good first step. It can be beneficial and that it helps you identify intrusive thoughts and refocus on your breath. But I think where it's not enough is that mindfulness kind of teaches us to detach a little bit whereas, you know, being fully embodied is about being completely present and in the moment in a different way than mindfulness is. Or allows you to. Yeah.

And I think there's something about embodiment that allows us to be more authentic and spontaneous in the moment. Can you talk about that a little bit more? Yeah. So I would say that the more that we're actually able to perceive our body and be in our body with comfort and grace, that it allows us to really just be.

And so there's this opportunity to not have to think so much about what am I going to

say? What am I going to do? And try to edit and try to control. But really this wonderful opportunity for spontaneity and allowing the natural expression of oneself to emerge with grace and ease and wonder. Totally.

And I think, you know, I just, as you're describing that, I'm thinking of, I've got two little kids and I just think about how that's what they do. They're very much like, I'm going to do that because it seemed like a good idea at the moment. It's almost like their body, so to speak, has a mind of its own.

And I think that we forget to listen to the mind that exists in the body or we try to separate them too much. And I think that that's what throws a lot of people off. Yes, and that there are, yes, many minds and they're saying now that they've studied the gut, right? And the biggest producer of serotonin in the body is the duodenum. And so that is in the gut. That is where we actually feel more happiness than we can within our mind.

And so, yeah, there's many ways of perceiving the world and that there's, yeah, there's an opportunity to honor all of those ways. So Tara, what is your advice to someone who is struggling to be in their body during sex? So we talked a little bit about some of the practices that they can do on a day-to-day basis, but let's say they are in the moment and they're noticing that they're struggling to stay present or they feel disconnected. What are some tools that they can use? I'm a big fan of slowing things down, of really becoming more present by maybe slowing your touchdown, beginning to vocalize what it is that you're experiencing.

So naming what it is that you're sensing in the moment and even speaking the truth as I'm beginning to shut down. I need to slow things down. And when we're actually able to slow things down, instead of speeding things up, that there's an opportunity for connection and vulnerability that doesn't necessarily happen when we speed things up, because I'd say that most of the speeding things up is in this desire to achieve orgasm more quickly.

And so it's kind of bypassing the sensations of what is. And if there is discomfort in the moment, whether it's emotional or physical in the sexual experience, in the sexual interaction, that it's okay to name that, that that is part of the process and that it's then owning what it is that you're experiencing. And when we own that experience, then we're actually able to address it more effectively.

So, and I would say that takes a lot of courage and it can be really scary to say, hey, I want to slow things down. But I invite people to try it, that if you're feeling comfortable enough to be sexual with this person, that you can maybe try to be comfortable enough to share your experience. I love that advice because I do think of how inclined people are to just kind of barrel through the experience when they notice that maybe they're feeling distracted or disconnected, rather than speaking up about, A, how they're feeling and B, what they may need to get back in touch with the experience, they just sort of push

through and kind of cultivate an experience that really doesn't make them feel any connected, any more connected than they did at the beginning and ultimately frustrated and that in and of itself perpetuates a really negative cycle. And so, yeah, I think of, I do a lot of research looking at the relationship between flow state and sexual satisfaction.

And so I'm always drawing analogies back to what people do who are trying to get into a flow state because I think that's what a lot of people want to feel during sex. And so I think of maybe an artist who just can't really get into flow or get into the zone with a painting. They may need to put the brush down and go take a walk or whatever it is to get out of that headspace and then come back and try again.

And I encourage people to do the same thing when it comes to sex. I am a believer that sex doesn't need to have a beginning, middle, and an end. Maybe if you notice that the experience is starting to plateau for whatever reason, you just, you know, either whether it's slowing things down and then picking back up in that moment or at another time, that that's all okay.

And I think it's important that people give themselves permission to do that. I love that. Yeah, I absolutely agree.

I think that's a great idea, Emily, and one that's particularly valuable. I mean, and one that oftentimes is overlooked and so easy to access.

So someone says, hey, I need to pump the brakes, slow things down a little bit, then what? I love that because I think it really is about this paradigm shift because oftentimes what I see is that we're stuck in a performative paradigm that I need to please my partner and disown my own sexual pleasure. And so in those moments where you're pumping the brakes, it's an opportunity to come back to yourself and come back to your own sense of pleasure, because, like, nobody is responsible for our orgasm, nobody is responsible for our pleasure, except for us. And then we get the opportunity to come back into what is pleasurable for me. How do I regain that flow state of experiencing the pleasure, which is available to us at every moment, in every second? I'm a big proponent of breath, sound and movement because I feel like those three modalities actually help move energy in the body, whether it's stuck because of trauma or we want to amplify sexual pleasure. So that's why I think that there's something really powerful about the vocalization of speaking your truth, particularly for women, because we've been so shut down and socialized to not speak our truth, that it is so powerful just to even make a sound like, ah, ah, ah. And to get up and move is also really powerful.

And they're simple activations that don't take a lot of energy or thought, but they're really powerful ways to change the subtle pattern of interaction, which oftentimes we get stuck. Yeah. Can you talk a little bit about those activations? Of the breath, sound and movement? Um, well, and I would say it's different for different people and that it really is about meeting oneself where we're at, because for some people, even just to say the

words of, I need to stop or I need to take a pause is a huge undertaking in and of itself.

And for others, where there's more ease, a flow, that the vocalization could actually be quite different. It could just be a sound and it could actually be quite loud and up and out. And there is many ways where then the sound travels through the body and creates the undulation of the spine.

So there are many ways to access it. I would encourage people to explore what feels comfortable for them, then I can give suggestions and guide people, but it really is coming back to what feels most comfortable.

A lot of the work that I do with couples and individuals is looking at how do they speak their truth when we don't even have a vocabulary to begin to speak about our pleasure? So, I mean, I was just talking to a doctor the other day and she was referencing my vulva and she was saying down there. And I'm like, this is the doctor who is saying down there. So there's not even the words and words are quite powerful.

So when we have words, we can actually begin to create a conceptual framework. Or maybe we have that already because we've created the words for ourselves. And when we don't have a vocabulary to speak about what brings us pleasure and the parts of our body, and when we don't have fluency to actually speak that to another, then that's a huge obstacle, and that that's one where we really need to focus on and take action there. How do I like to call myself? How do I refer to myself? What are the terms that bring me pleasure? When I'm in high states of arousal, do I use different words for myself or different parts of my body than in normal everyday life? And that those are really important to consider. And when I use those words in high arousal, does that turn my partner on? Or does that shut them off? Because sometimes it can do either.

And we don't know unless we figure out and have that conversation. And maybe having that conversation is not in the moments of high arousal, but it is in another time where we're able to talk about things in a more, I would say rational, if you will, or safe way. And I think that there's a lot of power to that.

I totally agree. And I think in addition to vocalizing your turn-ons and turn-offs and your desires and preferences, I'm a huge fan of just being vocal about when things feel good, not just saying that feels good, but using your moans and groans and ohs to communicate. And also recognizing that making sounds can enhance the sexual experience.

Not only does it indicate to your partner without having to like spell it out that they're on the right track or they're doing something that's really amplifying your pleasure. But I just think about sitting in a yoga class and taking a deep breath and how that feels versus taking a deep breath and exhaling with a big loud ohm and how much better that feels. Like you get the vibrations throughout your whole body.

And so I think it's really important to not shy away from whatever sounds feel natural to you during a sexual experience, because that's part of it. It's one of the senses. You mentioned breath as well.

Can you talk about that? Yes, yeah. So the ability to have awareness of where the breath is in the body is actually a really profound ability as well. And right now I think there's a lot of talk about Wim Hof breathing and maybe some people are familiar with holotropic breathing and that all of those ways are good, but there's, I would say, a little bit more forcefulness to that.

And my recommendation is oftentimes to start with a gentle approach of where's your breath already? Because we're already breathing, right? We're already here. And so bringing the attention to the breath in the body is a powerful way to move energy. So to amplify it, to express it, to release it.

And with the sound, it amplifies that experience. And that's a really wonderful tool or technique to be guided within your own body. And that we are resonant beings, right? And so when we're able to create that resonance with another person, sound, breath, and movement actually can make that connection even more powerful.

So I invite people to play with that if they're not already aware of those modalities, that they can begin to turn their attention to them and not necessarily try something on, but just first begin to identify where they're at. Can they notice their breath on a regular daily basis? Can they notice their breath when they're with another being? Because sometimes it stops our breath when we're with another person and we're not even aware of it. Yeah, and I think for anyone listening who maybe has a partner who's struggling to stay present and embodied, know that by you practicing deep breathing and calm breathing, that you can actually help your partner sink into that.

So there's interesting research that's come out of the University of Texas looking at how whatever's happening of one person physiologically, whether it's their heart rate or their breathing patterns, that people close to us can sync up to that. And this one study that Cindy Meston did in particular is coming to mind. And she found that in heterosexual couples that male's heart rate actually had a little bit more of an influence on their female partner's heart rate, which I found kind of interesting.

And there's different theories why that is, but I also think it's kind of helpful because I think women compared to men tend to struggle a little bit more to stay present and embodied for a multitude of reasons. And so if you're a guy listening to this and you have a female partner and she's struggling, know that simply by you taking a really deep cleansing breath could help her feel more relaxed as well. Yeah, yes.

And so that really fortifies the idea in psychology of attunement. So that is this process that we need, I would say, in successful sexual connections and also then the

employment of mirror neurons, right? So yes, so we're able to do that sense of neural entrainment with our partners when we're aware of what it is we're doing in our own body. Exactly.

And so you said breath, what were the other two? Sound. Sound, which we talked about, and? And movement.

And movement, okay. So talk about movement just for a moment. Yeah, and so I think that it's good to know what movements come natural to you, right? And then also to try on the ones that actually might be a little bit different, a little bit more of a reach, a little bit more expansion.

So both and, and oftentimes, again, we get stuck in patterns in which we engage. So they become habitual. And so then we have movements that we're more familiar with, which then sometimes lead to positions that we're more familiar with and that those are good.

And then also the opportunity is to expand and try something different. And I think novelty, of course, is going to release more endorphins and spark something in the brain that is going to say, hey, I want to try this or, hey, this is good. And that's really important because when we do the same thing over and over again, it gets boring.

It does get mundane. And it creates a level of homeostasis that isn't necessarily satisfying for either partner. Yeah, and I really encourage people to pay attention during a sexual experience because I bet that there are times when you have an inclination to move or to change positions, but you don't because maybe you're scared to or you've gotten comfortable with the way things are and challenge yourself instead to go with that impulse and see what happens and be open to those kind of internal guides that are there.

I love that, yeah. Well, this was a fascinating conversation, Tara. I'm so glad that we connected.

I feel that we're very aligned in the way that we think. So I'm so happy to have met you. Where can people find out more about you and your book and your workshops? Yeah, wonderful.

Thank you, Emily. So you can find out more about me on my website, taragaleano.com, which is my sex therapy practice. And I'm licensed in California, Arizona, and Colorado.

And then I also have a coaching practice for those who are not in those states. And that is rediscoveringmybody.com. And you can find my book on Amazon. Awesome, well, thank you so much.

And everyone, be sure to check out Tara. You've got some fascinating stuff and lots to

offer people. So I encourage everyone to take a look.

And I hope that we have a chance to connect again in the future. Me too. Thank you so much.