Touch without a goal

Time: about 30 minutes · You need: a mat or a bed, an alarm, music and a mirror if you like

In this exercise you touch yourself without working towards an orgasm. It links your heart with your sex. It coaxes you out of your sexual habits and invites you to feel more deeply and to accept your body as it is.

You can use it to develop erotic skills or to rediscover them. At the same time, the exercise is a kind of meditation with the body. You start actively, wake your body up, and at the end you come to rest in the here and now.

If you do the exercise often, perhaps even every day, your body learns a lot about your sexuality along the way. Old habits may start to shift. You work with breath, movement, touch, sound and your attention.

Getting ready

The exercise takes about half an hour. You can change it at any time so that it feels right for you, gives you strength and makes you want more. The one thing that matters is that you stay awake and present the whole time.

Decide whether you begin naked or dressed. You can take something off at any point during the exercise, depending on how you feel.

Set an alarm for 25 minutes. That way you don't have to look at the clock.

Arriving

How you begin is up to you. On some days you may feel under pressure and barely sense yourself. Then it often helps to dance to two or three songs, move vigorously, breathe loudly and moan. That lets the pressure out and gets you moving.

You can also shake your body for a few minutes. Or you lie straight down on a mat or the bed, stretch out, wriggle and tap your body all over. Another option: tense your muscles for a few minutes and let go again, until relaxation spreads.

If you already feel relaxed, simply lie down and begin.

The exercise

If you like, give your practice an intention. For example: "I dedicate this half hour to my sexual strength." Or: "… to my inner healing."

Turn your attention inwards, to your breath. You can already start touching yourself and waking your desire. How you touch yourself is entirely up to you: gently, kneading, tenderly, stimulating. I suggest you include your chest and your genitals. Come back to them again and again: the vulva on the outside and inside, the clitoris too, or the penis and testicles. Just not in a way that turns into deliberately masturbating towards an orgasm.

That isn't what this is about. As soon as your head takes over and you start stimulating yourself with a purpose, consciously let go on the out-breath. There is nothing to achieve. Breathe, feel, enjoy.

Keep bringing your whole body back in. Give yourself over to whatever unfolds on its own. There will also be days when hardly anything happens. That is fine too. Accept what is there.

If an orgasm comes, it is welcome. You don't have to hold it back, and you don't have to look for it either.

Every feeling that comes up may be there, including anger, shame and grief. Make sure, though, that you don't get so caught up in it that you lose your sexual sensations. Notice a feeling, let it in, express it if you want to. Then carry on: stroking, breathing, feeling your whole body.

When the alarm goes off, slow down. Stop stroking yourself, let your breath calm down and your body come to rest. Stay with the after-feeling for at least five minutes, longer if you like.

Variations

- Move your attention up from your pelvis and genitals to your heart. Imagine your breath flowing from your pelvis into your chest as you breathe in, and follow that stream. You can also imagine breathing in and out through your genitals. This variation can be very powerful and very moving.
- A very quiet variation without arousal: rest your attention on your genitals for half an hour. Breathe in and out through them. Then touch them slowly and meditatively, a vulva on the inside too if you like, and watch yourself as you would in a silent meditation.
- Watch yourself in a mirror during the exercise. How does your face change when you start touching yourself, when arousal spreads, when you let go?

You can shape the exercise as freely as you want. Do it standing up as an erotic dance. Play with your breath, your attention and your touch. Anything that gets you flowing is allowed.

And then

If you like, keep a journal: how does the exercise change over time? How do you experience yourself in it? What do you notice when you repeat it?