

Sex Life Upgrade: Find a Style That Connects Your Body & Mind – Layla Martin & Mistress Natalie – #900

Dave Asprey:

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Dave:

Today's guest, Layla Martin, has studied human sexuality and human biology at Stanford, and then spent 10 years learning from Tantric masters in the jungles of Asia. She founded the Tantric Institute of Integrated Sexuality and teaches people how to have epic sex and legendary love through a method she invented called the VITA Method. And her YouTube channel has about 90 million views. I mean, who would've thought a YouTube channel about sex having views. Layla, welcome to the show.

Layla Martin:

Thank you so much for having me.

Dave:

Now, you call yourself a hardcore science nerd with a keen interest in mystical things. How does hardcore science mix with mysticism?

Layla Martin:

Well, it's amazing that most science like this study that you've just cited is starting to back up what people already know if they're traveling and journeying in those areas. So I've known for 10, 15 years how much sex is a portal to higher states of consciousness, to rhythmic flow within the brain. Literally, they teach in Ancient Tantra that chucker work is really a hidden way to activate all areas of your brain.

Dave:

Today's guest is Mistress Natalie. She is a professional dominatrix. She's got about 20 years of doing something called BDSM, and we are going to have a scientific conversation about why and how and what happens there. So welcome to the show. This is going to be fun. Let's talk about your definition of BDSM. There are people listening and there's all kinds of preconceived notions about this. I've had a few friends who are super into BDSM and they all like different things. It seems like a very broad definition. So tell the audience how you define it, and let's just go through your story and then talk about what it does for people. So first, what is it?

Natalie:

Well, the acronym is bondage, discipline, dominance, submission and sadomasochism. But again, those words mean a lot of different things to different people, especially when you put them all together. And it definitely excludes another part of BDSM, which is fetishism. So the actual acronym doesn't really represent the whole picture and it is hugely, hugely just wide open to people's perception of what they consider BDSM. For me, because I've been practicing for so long and I have a lot of interests, it could be a range of things, but I could tell you, instead of maybe what exactly it is, is what it's not, at least for me in my professional and personal life. It's not about really truly hurting somebody. It's not about being completely selfish and it's not about being this demanding, overarching, stereotypical woman who's just using and debasing another human being. It's really about using kinky things, counterculture things,

fetish, and some of the things we would associate with BDSM, bondage and leather and restraints and restriction and punishment to get a person to where they need to be. And that's why what I do is so broad because it's completely individualized.

Dave:

The tantra practice itself was originally around longevity and around immortality.

Layla Martin:

Yes.

Dave:

Why did tantra become so focused on sex if it was originally a longevity practice?

Layla Martin:

It became mostly focused around sex in the 1920s all the way into the 1980s. There were waves of a couple of tantra teachers who came that were teaching neotantra specifically from India, and they really... When I really look at their teachings, one of the things I saw was that a core tantric teaching is go where there is the most resistance, go where you have the most conditioning, go where God is the least and find your access point there. So one of the teachings in yoga, everything is one, that's also a core tantric teaching. That's how it got into the yoga tradition. But most people are really comfortable saying God is one in the spaces they like, in the places they're comfortable with.

So I believe a lot of these Tantric masters were looking at where in the modern era do we have the most blockage, the most resistance, the most fear, the most hang-ups. It's in our sexuality, it's in your anus, your relationship to your own butt, right? It's that simple. People usually have the most hang-ups around pornography, around their sexual functioning. Most people would be horrified if there was an image of them having an orgasm on the internet, and orgasm is one of the most sacred, beautiful things a human can experience.

So these tantra teachers were essentially saying, "Let's go where there's the greatest return on doing work because the heart of the tantric teaching isn't being sexual or having amazing sex. The heart of the tantric teaching is unwind your systematic conditioning that puts you to sleep and zaps your energy." So I believe that they were recognizing that sex has one of the greatest returns on investment for people doing conscientious-focused work.

Dave:

What does in chastity mean?

Natalie:

There's various devices that you can actually wear that keep your genitals from getting an erection and that you can't stimulate it at all. So it's just sort of being locked away.

Dave:

So you have to padlock the equipment there, all right. So you take that off the table at the beginning.

Natalie:

This has nothing to do with what we're about to do. You're locked up, I have the key. Maybe you'll get it back. We'll see.

Dave:

Okay.

Natalie:

Sometimes I'll keep the key, give them a key in a lockbox with a combination, and then they have to wait X number of days for hopefully the email that comes with a code.

Dave:

So you send them home and they're still padlocked? Wow.

Natalie:

Yeah.

Dave:

I guess the TSA-

Natalie:

Wives, they love it.

Dave:

The wives love it?

Natalie:

Well, if they're a couple, and a couple is okay with this kind of play. A lot of times, they'll have assignments to really give their partner a lot of attention and all of a sudden, the focus just all goes on pleasing somebody else.

Dave:

So how much do you consider what you do psychological versus physical?

Natalie:

At this point, I would say it's a good 85% psychological, but I have 22 years of getting a group of subs that are probably more interested in the psychological benefits and the deeper connection that this can give. I don't take on a lot of new people at this point in my career. And if I do, they really have to be interested in the overarching sense of what BDSM can give and not just the physical aspect of it because I feel that's fleeting. So if you can tap into the mental aspects of it, that'll just keep giving and giving and giving. I have some subs now that are in their mid to late 70s.

Dave:

Wow.

Natalie:

And when other things start to not work so well and the body can't handle as much because I've been seeing them for 10 up to 16 years consistently, the brain is still very active and you can continue getting such joy out of things, and that sense of total relief and stress relieving from their mental aspects. So me personally, my style is way more mental than physical.

Layla Martin:

I definitely believe that being connected to your body, understanding your energy system, and having an ability to feel heightened sensations all contribute to being excellent in bed. Also, just a general comfort with your body, like who you are and how you show up is more important to me than sexual performance. That, I think, is really the heart of being an outstanding lover and this idea that you can actually train your sexuality the way that you would your physical health and fitness, your diet. We just don't have a model in society of valuing sexuality and sexual evolution. I also never like for people to hear, "Oh wow, someone's best in bed," and then I feel a lot of people respond to that with shame because they haven't realized that they have that same ability within themselves if they spend the time and do the work to cultivate it.

But what I see is when you're sitting there meditating, if you are in a state of numbness, a state of disconnection, you get bored, you're listening to your thoughts, your meditation's empty, it's hollow. When you fully accept what's going on, when you listen one level deeper, the meditation opens back up. You're in a state of flow. You're in a state of connection. Life comes alive again.

In relationship, I noticed the same thing happens. The container of relationship is designed to pull subconscious patterning up, blockages to love, blockages to sex, blockages to deep intimacy. But because couples don't recognize that and we've all been conditioned to think it should be a fairy tale, we should want to hop into bed with each other all the time, if we don't have that, there's something wrong with the relationship instead of actually changing that perspective to say, "Wow, my relationship is supposed to bring up issues. It's supposed to bring up discomfort. It's supposed to bring up pain from the past." And if I actually sit with it, integrate it, work on it, ask what's coming up, accept it, what I see is just like in meditation, those states integrate and move away and the love gets reborn and the sexual connection gets reborn even deeper than ever.

Dave:

That all sounds great. So how do you actually do that?

Layla Martin:

So this is where also it can be hard. It would be like in the 1950s being like, "How do you do yoga?"

Dave:

Yeah, totally.

Layla Martin:

We don't have a cultural baseline for fully understanding it. But what I like to think about is actually having a shared meditation practice, but between partners.

Dave:

I mean, is BDSM something that puts people in a state of flow?

Natalie:

Oh, definitely, without a doubt. In the community generally, people call it subspace. But yeah, it can if done properly really put the person who's participating in it in a serious state of flow and the after effects can last days where there's focus, there's relaxation, there's clarity. So I would see a huge parallel between the two.

Dave:

Okay. So people are coming to you, they're pushing their boundaries. And we know from the research on flow that pushing your boundaries puts you in a state of flow. And what you've got going on is you're pushing different boundaries than your ability to run even further in a marathon or something. You're pushing your boundaries. What is the boundary that you're pushing? It seems like-

Natalie:

For everybody, it's different. I think for some people running a half marathon would get them into that state if they weren't trained and for other people they'd have to run three marathons. So everybody's trail path to get to that state is different. That's why it's really important to communicate with them. For some people, it's physical, say, corporal punishment, one specific thing, spanking, flogging, whipping, slowly, gradually building up, taking more and more intensity, more and more severe pieces of equipment over a period of time until they get there. And some people can get there really quickly. And again, some people takes them quite a bit of time and a lot more pushing.

Same for bondage, restriction. For some people, it's simple, it's a blind fold or a gag. And for others, it literally has to be head and neck immobilization, blindfold, gag, straight jacket, body bag, toe bondage. But it could be any of these activities to really push that person.

Dave:

It sounds like an addiction because you start out with just one and then you need two and then you need three. Is this like smoking, or is this like an opiate and endorphin addiction?

Natalie:

Well, I don't know if it's so much an addiction for some people. I think just like with marathoners, one marathon will always be enough. That will always be more than enough. But for other people, they do one marathon and it's like, "No, I want to try ultramarathoning. So I have people I've been seeing for literally 15 years and what would get them into flow is still the same as it was about 15 years ago. And then, there are the more, more, more people, and that's a lot more challenging because sometimes I need to reign it in and be like, "No, there isn't more, more, more. You have to learn to adjust your expectations to what we have right here because it's not really healthy to keep expecting and always wanting bigger and better and more." It's not possible.

Dave:

I don't know, Layla, I'm feeling a little discomfort about just dumping all my feelings on my partner because they might not like it.

Layla Martin:

So here's the key, you want to build safety and vulnerability slowly and over time, and you don't want to dump. And so, that's the thing as well about really expressing is it's not just sharing with my partner,

expecting them to be okay. It's taking responsibility for my feelings and my expression and slowly over time building the safety. So I get a little bit more vulnerable with you, you meet me with safety. Or if you don't, we actually work on that. What would safety look like? Then, you get a little bit more vulnerable with me and I create safety for you. Or if I don't, we realize, "Okay, that's our edge right now. How do we go from there and keep building more and more and more?" So yeah, you don't go home and be like, "Hey, guess what, I've been fantasizing about orgies with like 20 oiled up people at a sex party or whatever." Your partner's like, "What the fuck?" That's not what I'm saying, but it's beautiful in partnership to actually build up to this space of knowing who, being okay holding safety of experience for who the other person is.

Now, this is what I've found and you can totally question on me on this, and all of you can try this out over time. Long-term relationships only maintain sexual attraction and heightened love if there's a willingness to explore, to be vulnerable, to be open. Now, that doesn't mean you have to share all your thoughts and feelings with your partner all the time, that you have to leak out on them or share all your shitty feelings all the time and bring them down. But it's a kind of integrity with them about who you are and a willingness to express that over and over again.

Dave:

How did you do that? I want to hear the other things of it. How do you get someone to lose 100 pounds by-

Natalie:

Well, there's a couple of people who've lost more than 50.

Dave:

Wow.

Natalie:

Yeah. I mean, I'm so proud of them. It's absolutely amazing. Again, accountability is a large part of it and they don't want to disappoint me. That's another really huge aspect to this because we already have a relationship and they don't want to come in and be disappointed. And then, there's always the fear of "If I'm disappointing and I'm not living up to what I say I'm going to do, I'm not going to get to participate in this activity and have this relationship anymore," because I make it very clear that if they're not serious, then I'm just not going to see them. I'm not going to invest my time and energy into this relationship unless you come to me with the same amount that I'm going to bring, because I'm always going to bring 100% so I expect the same out of my subs. And that really, really drives them because they know I never phone it in. So if I'm preparing and I'm planning and I'm putting things together and I'm being very particular to their needs or interests, they need to give me the same in return.

And as far as the 100 pounds, it was very interesting. Being 240 pounds at one point myself, 100 pounds more than I weigh now, I completely understand what it's like to be on that side of things. And so, in planning for this trip, every time I'd see them 20 pounds, 20 pounds, 20 pounds and then they said to me, which is what I suspected, is that, "I didn't want to go to a beach area and walk around with you looking the way that I used to look because I would've embarrassed you."

Dave:

Wow.

Natalie:

I mean, talk about powerful. It's like-

Dave:

Yeah, that is powerful.

Natalie:

It is. It really almost brings tears to my eyes to just think just the relationship that we had would make them do something like lose 100 pounds after trying and struggling for so long. Did I know that that little trip was going to cause this effect? Absolutely not. But once I saw what it was doing, I totally picked up on that and then started having all the things that I could do putting it in place to make sure that they would continue down that path.

Dave:

So contrast the male perspective on orgasm and ejaculation versus the female perspective for me.

Layla Martin:

Right. So the female perspective is that orgasm is one of the highest energy states you can get into. It also floods your body with oxytocin, dopamine, like all of these amazing neurological experiences related to hormones, related to neurotransmitters, all of that. It's this deeply healing state. And all the research backs that up, that the more sex you have, the healthier you are. So for a woman to learn to work with your pleasure and even ecstasy... So I love talking about ecstasy because pleasure's the first step, but when you're fully surrendered to it, your mind is blown, which is what we say we want in sex. It's actually ecstasy. And what's so fascinating is most ancient cultures used ecstasy as a path to heal. One of the things I love is in the ancient Greek traditions, the Pagan traditions before Christianity came, it was ecstasy that healed your soul. So you didn't go to a priest and practice confession. You drenched yourself in ecstasy and that's what healed and saved you because it was like a purifying element to your soul.

Dave:

You go to like a sex temple.

Layla Martin:

Yeah. Yup, exactly.

Dave:

Okay.

Layla Martin:

And so, for women specifically to learn to say yes to that pleasure state, to learn to enter states of ecstasy, which a lot of women are terrified of, and I have tremendous compassion for that, I started out that way and yet it's accessible to all of us, that's one of their big sexual journeys, if you will. And the more orgasms they can have, the more they can enter that orgasmic state. I just see that that makes women stronger, healthier, more anchored, more connected.

For men, as you're talking about, it's a little bit different. It's learning to harness. It's learning to be in control of. It's learning to be able to sit and not be overcome by your sexual desire, overcome by the sexual impulse, but to actually channel and work with the sexual impulse. And there's a lot for men in being able to say no, in being able to witness, and then ultimately, in being able to work with. So I think the next stage after a certain amount of ejaculation, abstinence is learning to work with all of that energy that you've harnessed. Now, that will naturally flood into whatever you're doing in your life. So it will flood into your career, it will flood into your high level thinking, will flood into the way you present yourself on stage, the way you raise your children, all of that.

But for men, I believe it's my personal belief and experience that that high level supercharged state is valuable as well. And so, once you have stopped feeling controlled by the need to ejaculate or controlled by the need to procreate, you can then also work with that ecstatic pleasure-filled intimacy. And I think men are socialized to believe that that's not as much for them, and I don't believe that. I believe men are just as healed and nourished by deep orgasmic states, by deep states of pleasure and ecstasy. It's just that once they separate that from ejaculation, they don't have to make the choice anymore and they can actually train their bodies where orgasm becomes a nourishing experience rather than a depleting experience.

Dave:

You mentioned slut training. What is slut training?

Natalie:

Okay. Slut training is actually one of my favorite things to do and it plays into a lot of role reversal. So basically, it's taking this guy who's probably pretty guys, guy, kind of a guy, either Wall Street or a lawyer or a construction worker and taking the role and reversing it. And one, we never call men's sluts. That's a term that's only used for women in a pretty derogatory one. So it's fun to take whatever sexual arousal that they're feeling and call them a slut just because it's something that's counterculture, something you're not supposed to do. And then, emasculate them with a pair of panties, stockings and make them do feminine things. A lot of my clients are very into the whole imagery of a female with a strap on. It's a fetish.

So putting them in a position where I'm literally wearing the genitals of a guy and they are forced into this position of being more like a woman, a maid, crawl around nails painted, lipstick, it could go pretty far to full transformation, but even if it's just embracing their sexuality in a non-masculine way. I think men approach sex in a certain way and they always have to be the one in charge and it's all about the orgasm, but when you flip it on them and make them moan and touch their own body and get in touch with that more feminine side of themselves, it's an interesting mind flip to see what it does to them and the creativity that they come up with and the letting go of preconceived notions and boundaries and just diving into this place.

If you were outside looking in, you would think it was ridiculous. Here's this 6'4 guy who's probably with a beard in a bra and panty's rolling around on the floor, touching himself and moaning like a girl. I mean, the imagery is literally-

Dave:

That does sound a little ridiculous.

Natalie:

It is. I mean, honestly. The outsider looking in would be like, "This is just stupid," but when you're in the moment and you're being told to do these things that are really challenging you, I mean, challenging your masculinity, challenging who you are as a person, doing all these feminine things that you're not supposed to do, you're breaking all of these boundaries and notions of who you are as a person. And putting yourself in that situation is very challenging, but I also think pretty cathartic for a lot of guys getting them to just be more in tune with their emotions and their intuition.

I had one person say after a couple of years, did lots of slut training, he's like, "This whole thing, I have to thank you for the huge boost in the career that I have had because I have literally been able to change the way that I think when I approach things now, and it's no longer from this narrow-focused masculine, this is the way the job is supposed to be done kind of way. And I've really started thinking outside of the box and going in areas other people were scared to go," and he's like, "My business has just shot through the roof." And he is like, "I have you to thank for it," my sissy training.

Dave:

Was 50 Shades of Grey good for the world's sex life or bad for it?

Natalie:

Well, I think it was positive and then it was like, "Wow, women have desire. They want kinky, hot stuff." They have these desires. It's okay to want to be dominated. It's okay to want to be instructed what to do and be brought into surrender. When I read 50 Shades of Grey, I was like, "Wow. Yes, it's hot. It's hot to surrender. It's hot to experience domination. It's hot to experience leadership in the bedroom." Now, that's not the only desire that women have, it's multifaceted, but I loved that that at least got some air time, let's say. Also, apparently, erotica is... Porn is what men like to consume sexually in general, although women consume porn as well but women like to consume erotica, and there's this huge untapped appreciation for women's relationship to erotica.

Dave:

One of my favorite little strange things that popped up on Instagram somewhere was a picture that someone's said, "Mom," and said to her, "Oh look, the kitty's reading." It's a picture of her iPad and little kittens peeking over the top of it. But then you look on this screen and it's like raunchy porn, not video porn, but reading porn erotica. And the thread at the bottom was, "Mom, what are you reading?"

Natalie:

Mommy's reading things that make her feel amazing. But the thing I didn't like about 50 Shades of Grey was it's non-consensual. It's not the best example of how amazing BDSM can be. And I feel like every couple should do a good high quality BDSM training, whether they're into kink or not, because it makes your power dynamics so conscious.

Dave:

Yeah, learning how to surrender or accept surrender would be a pretty important skill. Mistress Natalie came on a while ago and talked about that and what she had done with her clients and all and how it was mostly psychology and really not. It's sexy, but not actual sex.

Natalie:

It's so psychological. And to learn how to dom your partner, a partner who wants to be domed and is willing to be domed, it's like, "Mmm." It's one of the most delicious skills.

Dave:

Okay. Someone comes to you tomorrow and says, "I want to kick ass at everything. I want to perform better at life." What are the three most important things that I should know? What would you tell them, given your very unusual journey of your life?

Natalie:

Let's see. I would say the first thing would be self-aware. And if you're not, definitely look into finding out who you are as a person and what it is that you like and what really makes you tick or who do you really want to be, because I think too many times in life, we are stuck doing a whole bunch of stuff that we don't really want to do because everyone tells us we should and it'll make us happy, and most people wind up being miserable. So really, finding a lot of self-awareness is going to be the first thing that's super important.

Then, have some practice of being grateful for things, even things that you might think you shouldn't be grateful for. Finding some way to really look at your life and be like, "Wow, I'm grateful for X, Y, and Z," and do that on a pretty consistent basis because I think that gets lost in the looking for more, trying to be better, or getting down on yourself. So that would be number two.

And number three would probably be to make sure to confront your fears, challenge yourself in some way. I like to personally do one thing that's going to scare the crap out of me every year, like one big, like, "This is really scary to me and I'm going to do it." And it doesn't have to be a big thing, but just even if they're small fears, you'd be surprised how amazing it feels to actually confront the fear and then you realize the fear of the fear was way worse than the fear itself than it could hold you back from a lot in life.

Dave:

Tell me more about polarity. What's that?

Natalie:

Polarity is this idea that just like in a battery, if one person is holding one side of the energy coin then another person holds the other side, there can be a lot of attraction between the two. So the core polarity in the Tantric and [inaudible 00:30:14] tradition is consciousness and energy. So one partner is really bringing full presence, and what's interesting is you can even think of it in terms of dominance and submission. The fully conscious partner is, in some ways, directing and holding the space of the experience. And when someone shows up and does that, the other partner naturally can fall into energy flow and surrender. So it's playing with that dynamic.

Now, a lot of people crave energy flow and surrender, both men and women. That's why a lot of men go and see doms in BDSM because they want that state of energy flow and surrender, and oftentimes their female partners aren't willing to dom them or show up in consciousness enough to offer them the opportunity to surrender. So it's been too often put into a narrow-gendered box that men hold consciousness and women hold energy, but I don't find that to be true at all as we both crave the stillness and mastery of holding dynamic space for our partners and allowing them to surrender and we all crave this deep surrender where your mind is gone. You're in a space of loss of control and usually your body floods with energy in that state.

So it's really powerful to be able to navigate what happens to my partner when I really own the consciousness poll. Are they able to surrender and drop in energetically and vice versa? And you can actually work through blockages, right? A lot of women have fear of being the conscious poll in their partner because they've been conditioned to believe that that's what men do, but a lot of men are going to see like dominatrixes because they crave the state of surrender. They crave being flooded with energy. So I train women in heterosexual partnerships to offer experiences for men that allow them that surrendered energy state, 30-minute penis massages, breath work sessions, things where men learn to enter surrender and they don't have to perform. They don't have to be in a state of control and vice versa.

If you ask women what is your number one sexual craving, I'd say the top one that I see over and over again is "I want to surrender. I want to be..." You don't say the full word. "I want to be effed open to God," right? "I want the third thing brought to me and I want it to blow my mind. I want to be in a state of just mind blown," right? That's a state of surrender. So for women to conscientiously say, "What keeps me out of surrender? How can my partner support me into a greater state of surrender," but also you can train yourself through woke masturbation to be able to surrender. So it's not all about your partner. You're not waiting for the perfect partner. Maybe it's the pool boy. And you can get into a really powerful state of ecstatic surrender. When you learn to do that, it's so sexually liberating because you're not waiting around for your partner to figure it out, although obviously you still want to express your desires to your partner in having sex that feels good to you.

Dave:

Now, Mistress Natalie, where can people find out more about you?

Natalie:

My website is mistressnatalie.com, so that would probably be the best place. There are some videos up, another interview that I did, some videos of my studio, and a plethora of information, photos going back to the early years in the early 2000s, and my statement about what I do and philosophies. And then, I have my blog, which is definitely more graphic. So if you're squeamish, that might not be the place to start.

Dave:

So you just tripled your traffic levels when you said that. Jeez. Oh no, not a graphic blog. That'd be terrible. On that note, Mistress Natalie, anything else you'd like to say to the audience before we sign off?

Natalie:

Just keep listening to this absolutely amazing podcast and I hope that there are a lot of people out there who got something beneficial out of it.

Dave:

There's all sorts of crazy stuff that's out there.

Layla Martin:

Totally. And we're so unaware of it. One of the most basic things I teach men who don't believe in energy is if you're having consensual sex with a partner, just imagine a beam of powerful potent energy

coming out of your penis and penetrating your partner and just see what happens, then tell me whether you believe in energy or not.

Dave:

Yeah. They'll believe in energy after that. That's not a problem. So just talking about that, studying it, both from a mystical and from a science perspective, and putting it into a body of knowledge is valuable work. And honestly, it's one of those three F words that all people have to deal with to evolve as humans. So I'm glad that you're out there at the forefront doing that work. Thank you.

Layla Martin:

Thank you so much. And if you talk about meditation, if you capture people talking about deep states of meditation and deep states of orgasm, you actually can't tell the difference between the two. It's crazy that we've made one of them uplifted now and sacred in our society. And it's encouraged to practice meditation and mindfulness, although that is only in the last 10 years. It's my mission for sexuality to have that same elevation and for people to have the same level of awe and comfort and appreciation for what sex has to offer us.

Dave:

Well, it's coming.

Layla Martin:

Yes. Thank you, Dave.

Dave:

I was just waiting.

Layla Martin:

Literally, nothing after that. There should be... He actually winked because you couldn't see that, but there was... That was like mic drop.