



C A F F Y N J E S S E

ECSTATIC BELONGING

IMAGINAL
COMMUNITY

fighting capitalism and colonialism
with our wild imaginations, loving
touch, and daring dreams

Contents

The Medicine Path of Embodied Love.....	
Imaginal Community	
Six Steps to Ecstatic Belonging.....	
Rhythm	
Resources	
Resonance.....	
Rewilding Awareness	
Somatic Openings	
An Important Note on the Neural Learning Zone	
I am Not a Teacher Here	
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Book and cover design by Janine Manlangit

Can we learn to live and die in ever-better love,
instead of being ruled by fear?

Can we find transpersonal belonging
ecstatically, instead of traumatically?

By reconnecting ecstasy with equilibrium,
we find the true mechanism
for personal and interpersonal neuroendocrine systems.

And magic can happen.
We already know this to be true.

The universe is magic.
According to the laws of physics, all this should not exist.
The biosphere is queer and unpredictable.

The singular one of you is powerful magic too -
I see you: rule-breaker; lovemaker.
Let me make love with you.

Let's fight capitalism and colonialism with our wild imaginations,
loving touch and daring dreams.

We can make space and time,
for even more magic.

What if we get this right?

Let's dive in, and share delight!

The Medicine Path of Embodied Love



There is a medicine path of embodied love I want to share with you. On this path, we commit to our own souls and feel them amplified, as we join in intimate connection with one another. Integrity grows in the experience of deep, abiding intimacies, resourced by many experiences of ecstasy.

Embodied love is everywhere, within and around us, but we aren't trained to know and grow it. We live and die as parched versions of ourselves, without its guiding

gifts. Epidemic levels of social isolation and loneliness are affecting people's physical and mental health, across the world. Our disconnection from each other feeds the politics of hate. It undergirds economies of fear, generating cascades of catastrophic consequences. Crisis after crisis, we problem-solve, with increasing urgency and mounting hopelessness.

We know it should be different. Moreover, many of us experience rare moments when we feel profoundly different. Through many different practices, we harvest moments of expanded awareness. A sense of ecstatic belonging emerges and feels like home. For precious moments, we are at one with ourselves, each other, and all life.

Psychedelic medicine and erotic practice are ways I reliably find the homecoming of ecstatic belonging. Others find it through activism, artmaking, sweat lodges, forest bathing, music, dance, meditation, community celebration, lovemaking, ninety recovery meetings in ninety days.... There are many ways we access an embodied experience of love, and transpersonal unity. We are taught to frame our moments of ecstatic belonging as occasional, extraordinary experiences; we return then to "real life" and its urgencies. What if instead we choose to really pay attention to our ecstasies, and root our lives and loves in them? I will explain how, in the science of nervous systems and ecosystems, ecstasies serve as truing mechanisms. Ecstatic practice helps us weave loving intimacies and supportive communities. We are inventing and living powerful alternatives to capitalism and colonialism, with our wild imaginations, loving touch and daring dreams.

"Ecstatic Belonging" is the theme that focuses my personal explorations, as I walk my own medicine path. Different aspects of ecstatic belonging support one

The Medicine Path of Embodied Love

another, and deepening into the differences sequentially feels enriching. The calendar I suggest here is a rhythm I can dance to, in my own ongoing learning. Certain psychedelic medicines, exercises and erotic practices feel best, as I dive into different aspects of ecstatic belonging. In the science of stardust, cells and soils, there are stories to inspire. There is poetry, too, in this more beautiful world that is both ancient and new. "Ecstatic Belonging" is not a curriculum I am trying to teach. It is a way of life I practice. I invite you to join me, in whatever particular way can work for you. What is your medicine path? How do you find and feel embodied love? What is your ecstatic practice?

Whatever month you come upon this offering, you are welcome to join me in my rhythm. Or you can make your own desire lines through the text, and generate your own rhythm. Take what you like, and leave the rest.



Imaginal Community



I invite you to join a community of practice that exists only in our imaginations. Come play with me, outside of ordinary mind and linear time. We can be like imaginal cells that grow at the edges of an insect larva, imagining the beauty that can emerge from the molecular soup of death and disintegration, as the world ends¹. In insect metamorphosis, imaginal cells get activated when an insect larvae pupates. As the larval form of life dies and dissolves, these cells begin to resonate with one another.

¹ this idea comes from multi-disciplinary artist and cultural provocateur Alixa Garcia

They reach for connection, until they form into the exoskeleton of an adult insect. A new, unpredictable form of life comes into being, in the face of certain death.

We can potentially access a counternormative consciousness when we are in ritual space with psychedelic medicines, immersed in passionate pursuits, or savouring post-orgasmic bliss. A spacious, non-linear time-inside-time opens up, and there is time to listen to the embodied wisdom within and between us. Attuning to the more-than-human world, we find resonance with one another. We reach together, for otherwise unknowable ecstasies, as we find welcome for our singular souls and skins. There is magic here. We can find ways to decohere love and fear, and support one another to choose love.

Imaginal Community



Six Steps to Ecstatic Belonging

Ecstatic belonging is a climax state that keeps emerging, on the medicine path of embodied love. The path itself is sometimes joyful. It is sometimes tortuous. Through challenges and delights, these are the steps I want to keep on taking, simultaneously and sequentially:

1. I surrender to the ever-emerging truth of me. I belong to my own soul. I know and grow it.
2. I belong to those I love. I practice welcoming and cherishing them, including their unlovable parts.
3. I want ecstasy, and I commit to belonging to my longing.
4. I belong to the biosphere that lives through me.
5. I commit to repairing harm I have done, whether intentionally or unintentionally.
6. I cherish non-being and integrate spaciousness. I weave my self into the web of life and death.

Rhythm

This is the calendar I loosely follow. In each 2-month period I have specific psychedelic medicines, exercises and erotic practices to resource my inquiry.

January & February: Belonging to Our Souls

There is a belonging that no tyrant can take from us. There is only one me. There is only one you. How can we better discern and follow our souls' callings?

March and April: Belonging to Each Other

We can fail each other, and disappoint ourselves, and still reach for more and better love. There are medicines and practices to guide us.

May and June: Belonging to Ecstasy

We can learn from the more-than-human world, and from the stardust, cells and soils of us, to belong to our longing for ecstasy, and build capacities for expanded ecstatic states.

July and August: Belonging to Interbeing

We can choose interbeing, and join the more-than-human world in its wild wisdoms, so we feel the companionship of others, lovers and ancestors, in the web of life and death.

September and October: Belonging to Repair

We can learn to belong to repair, heal harm we have done, and make amends.

November and December: Belonging to Nonbeing

We can explore and ally with the spaciousness of non-being, within and around us, as we practice dying.

Resources



If it amplifies your participation in imaginal community, please join me in the free online learning environment I offer at this link:

www.EcstaticBelonging.com

I have been a writer, teacher and champion of embodied love for decades. I share writings in the online program, and update them. There are videos, an interactive app, graphics, body-based exercises, erotic practices, and a process for guiding generative conflict. But I know that lists of things to do, without resonant companions to do them with, will only add to the despair and overwhelm that is so appropriate to this historical moment. I hope you find something in the online environment that brings joy to you, while we find our way to one another.

Resonance



I don't want to fill our already-jam-packed time with more commitments, screentime and things to do. There is an alternate path of connection and care that works through resonance. When we find resonance with another or others, there is amplification of our own vibration. We find empowerment, and deep, sustaining pleasure. Interactions between resonant frequencies allow for the generation and storage of vibrational energy.

Resonance is an emergent property of systems at a vast range of spatial scales, from sub-atomic particles to relationships between stars. We have a longing for

resonant relationships. If we let our longing exist, and give it our attention, it will guide us home.

Resonant relationships are generative. They open new dimensions of me and you. They let us settle into the singularity I am and you are, and co-create just-this-one of us, that we can only be together. Our singularity, anchored in a resilient web of belonging, gets deepened in its dignity. Belonging, manifested through intricate intimacies between resonant singularities, gets evermore power and truth.

With resonance, two is more than one plus one. We exit linear time, where addition is simple. We bid goodbye to the heteronormative world of either-or. The weave of us is more than the sum of us. Energy unique to us is generated, because of relationship, just as happens at every level of existence. Like atoms, molecules, cells, ecosystems, solar systems, we conspire. Reaching out from the truth of enhanced stability and empowerment, we feel and find our way to other resonant intimacies, and communal ecstasies. In the weave of an ever-evolving us, we generate power.

With resonance, we contradict the laws of physics. We open spacious time, within just-this-one moment that will never be again. There is time inside time then, for a sacred pause.

In the sacred pause, there is time to wonder: Will there be more time for the biosphere of life-giving love to go on becoming? Or is this time's end? Dare we follow our longing for even more love, and even more time? Dare we feel how that same longing organizes the atoms, cells, soils and souls of us? Have we capacity to hold the terror and the grief? Have we courage? Have we companionship? In the weave of us, each ecstasy can say Yes! to what we dare to dream of.

Rewilding Awareness



On the medicine path of embodied love, we need ongoing practices of rewilding awareness, so we don't stay in thrall to the hypnotic normal. Normative belonging is always precarious; it is earned by sacrifice and service, or secured by domination and control.

For me, entheogens like psilocybin and LSD are allies in rewilding awareness. These medicines change neuron connectivity, and transform the way brain systems synchronize. When our brains' subcritical "Default Mode Network" is exceeded, we access a more critical, creative awareness – what I describe as "Wild Mind."

Neuroplasticity is amplified; dendrites on neurons get multiplied. Psychedelic medicines are known to be effective at the level of individual healing, addressing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, anxiety and fear of death.

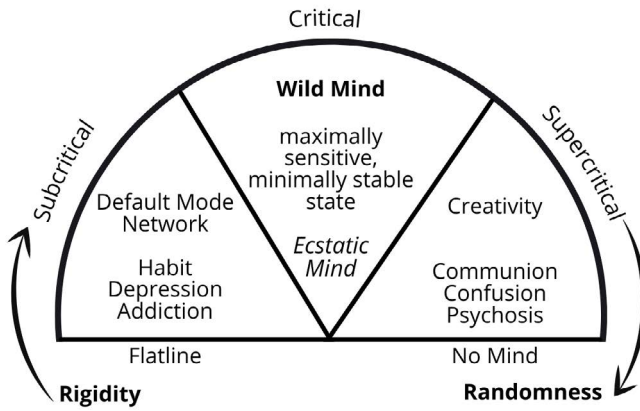
I believe we can co-create ways for these medicines to resource the work of social and environmental justice. They can help us find and practice enduring love. With the support of psychedelic medicines, we can become brave enough to lean into our longings for ecstatic belonging, even in the ongoing trauma, grief and terror of all the true dangers we are living and dying in.

I am committed to an ongoing, embodied practice of reaching for the ecstatic dimensions of my loving. I will share how I use ritual as a way to welcome intimacy, ecstasy and integrity into my relationships. In regular rituals I co-create with friends, we sometimes integrate chemical empathogens, like MDMA, also known as "Ecstasy." MDMA generates a flood of magnocellular oxytocin that can reopen a neural learning window for social belonging – a window that otherwise closes in late adolescence. Instead of being stuck with the messages about belonging that we learned in our teens, we can go on learning.

Psychedelic medicines help us open doors that have rusted shut, but they come with real risks. Using psychedelics certainly isn't necessary. Many people don't want to work with medicines, or don't have safe access to them. Whether or not we integrate the use of psychedelics into our lives and relationships, a commitment to rewilding awareness requires other body-based practices.

Wild mind hovers in criticality, where new possibilities are ever-emerging.

Rewilding Awareness



Somatic Openings

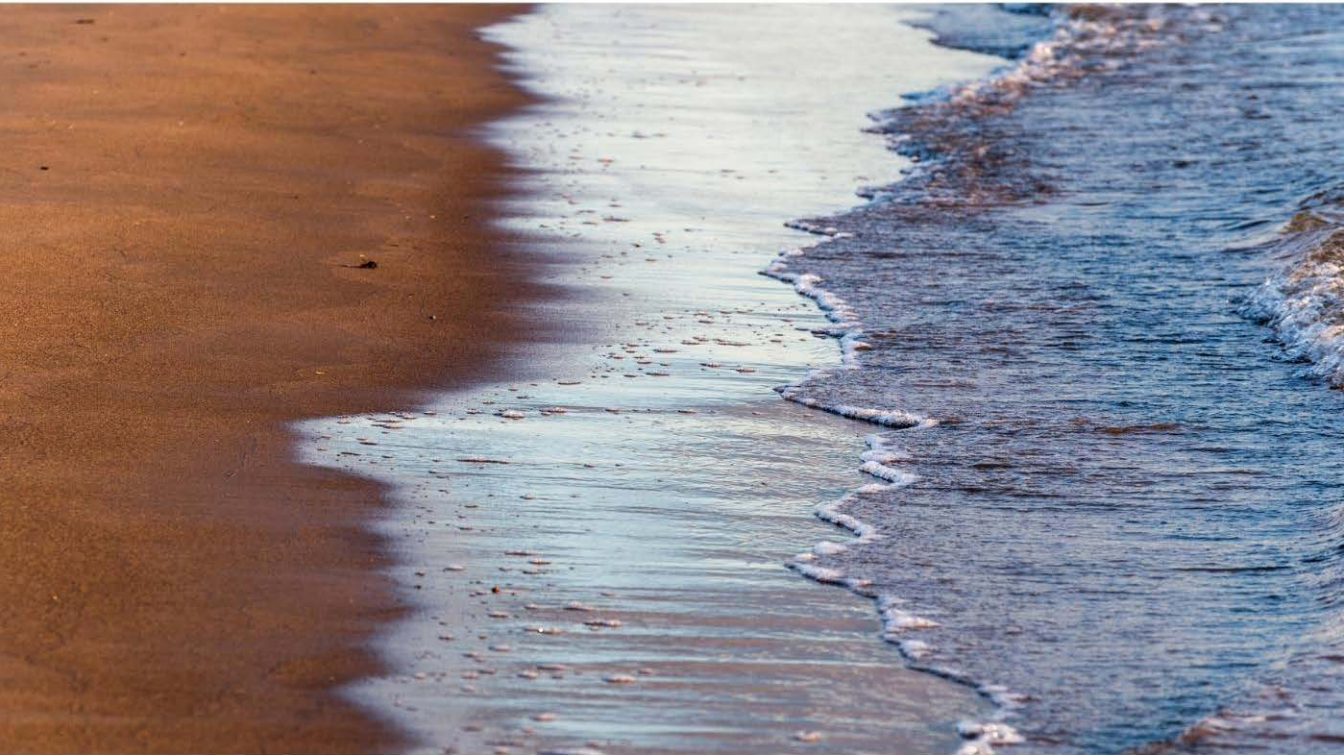
Conscious breathing, mindful erotic practice and erotic massage all foster similar neuroendocrine shifts to those we can find through psychedelic medicines. Stretching our bodies and souls into brave learning, we expand what is possible. For many years I worked as a sacred intimate, and a teacher of somatic sex education, developing the embodiment practices and erotic practices that might resource us. We can use various ecstatic practices to tune into the living world that lives through our bodies. We can viscerally experience somatic openings that reveal the intersection of sex and spirit. These rich and multifaceted practices deepen their impact over time.

But please be careful! In ecstasy, we are likely to feel a sense of exceeding our singular selves in experiencing a transpersonal unity with all life. For people who have not developed capacity for this experience, the self-abandonment of ecstasy can feel profoundly unsafe. It might trigger memories of how, during terrible experiences of trauma, we experience a dissociative self-abandonment. In the imaginal community I invite, I imagine we are:

- choosing and cultivating the joyful self-leaving we feel and find, in experiences of ecstatic belonging,
- and distinguishing this from the terrible self-leaving we feel and find, in the dissociative self-abandonment of trauma.

This is the work and play I invite you to. We can belong to each other, and the process.

An Important Note on the Neural Learning Zone



There is a well-known biological principle: too much stress is harmful. Trauma and chronic stress literally, biophysically damage cells, and impair the functioning of nervous systems. Too-little stress is just as harmful; it leads to nervous system atrophy. There is a place of just-right stress that supports the growth and strength of any organism. I call it the personal neural learning zone. The same principle applies in our relationships with one another. There is a place of just-enough stress that is our interpersonal learning zone, where we can be in the embodied learning of even-better love.

In what I share here, I describe how I work with

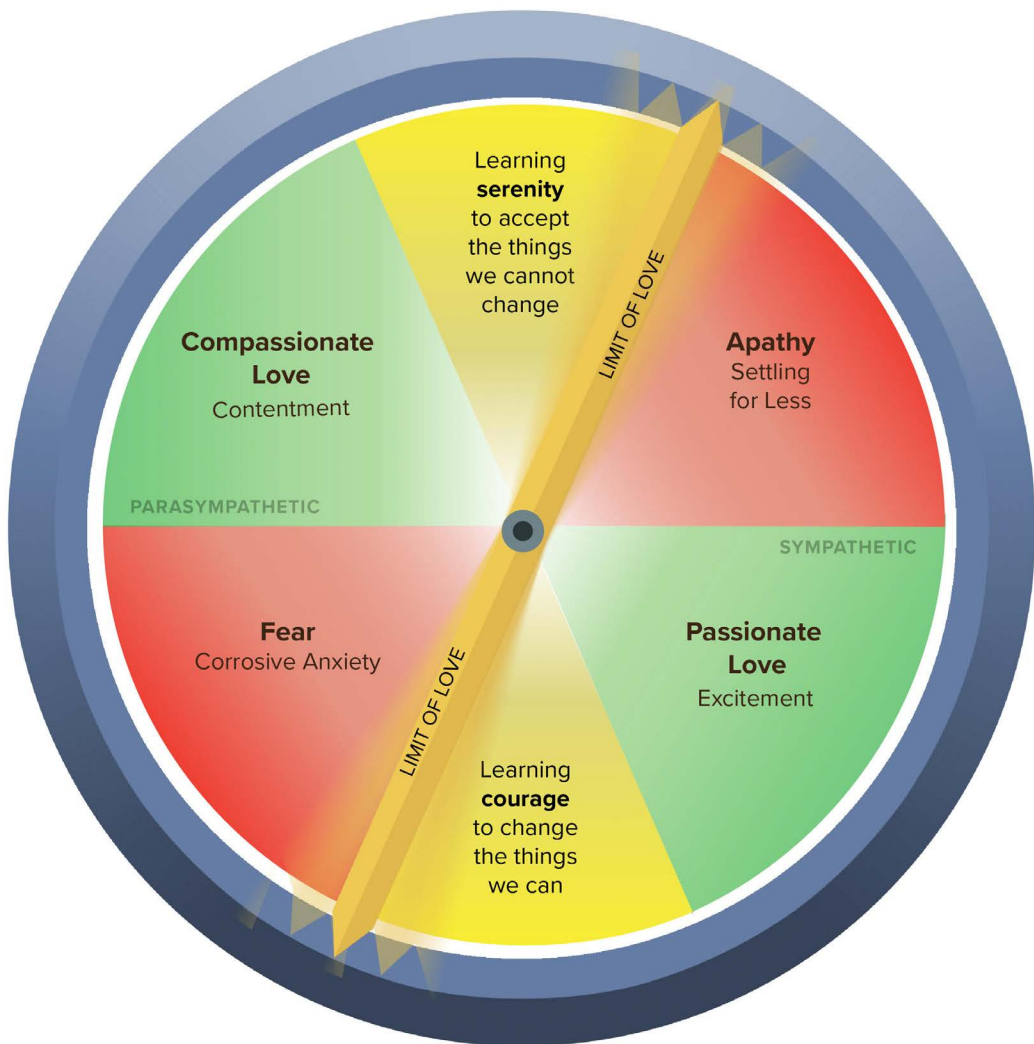
different psychedelic medicine practices, and erotic practices. I don't teach, discuss dosage, or describe all the necessary precautions. There may be many good reasons not to do what I do! Medicines are powerful, and we need to learn their ways with reliable guides. Readers may have disabilities that make an exercise irrelevant. Any particular exercise can feel too dangerous, triggering trauma responses that make it impossible for learning to emerge. Or any exercise can feel too boring to foster nervous system growth. We can learn to work and play in our personal and interpersonal neural learning zones, by noticing when we get uncomfortable, but not unsafe. Then we need to get brave and resourced enough to choose discomfort, and welcome neurological change. Check the ripcord on your parachute, before you jump. Any exercise I describe can be done in imagination, or actually. Imagining doing something new lights up new neural pathways and generates biophysical change.

There are two branches of the autonomic nervous system; our neural learning zone has both sympathetic and parasympathetic components. The sympathetic branch of our autonomic nervous system (SNS) guides our excited, "awake and take" energies. Too much SNS activation becomes "fight or flight" energy - it feels like corrosive fear. But with too little brave excitement, we go flat and wither. The parasympathetic branch of our autonomic nervous system (PNS) guides our peaceful, "rest and digest" energies. Too little PNS activation means we are ever-anxious; we never rest and feel deeply satisfied. Too much PNS activation means we are overattached to feeling safe; our nervous systems atrophy. Between too much and too little activation in both branches of our autonomic nervous system, there is an ever-changing neural learning zone where love can grow. A commitment to the path of embodied love keeps us exploring the brave-enough, safe-enough, ever-imperfect practice of learning both courage and serenity.

Neural Learning Zone

Every one of us needs to track our personal neural learning zone. How you engage with these materials can be guided by the ongoing inquiry. Please pick or invent the practices that are brave enough and safe enough for you! We can honour neurodiversity, and support each other in growing competencies, while learning to move at the pace of trust. Bravely trying things on, making mistakes, resting awhile and making repair are all part of inhabiting our personal and interpersonal neural learning zones.

Figure by Caffyn Jesse with Mark Hand: The neural learning zones of the sympathetic and parasympathetic branches of our autonomic nervous system, visualized as the limit of love.



I am Not a Teacher Here

“Ecstatic Belonging” is a reach for companionship, on my journey as a queer elder on the path of embodied love. It is important to say I am not a teacher here. I am a fellow explorer. I am a would-be lover, offering these gifts of my imperfect love to you.

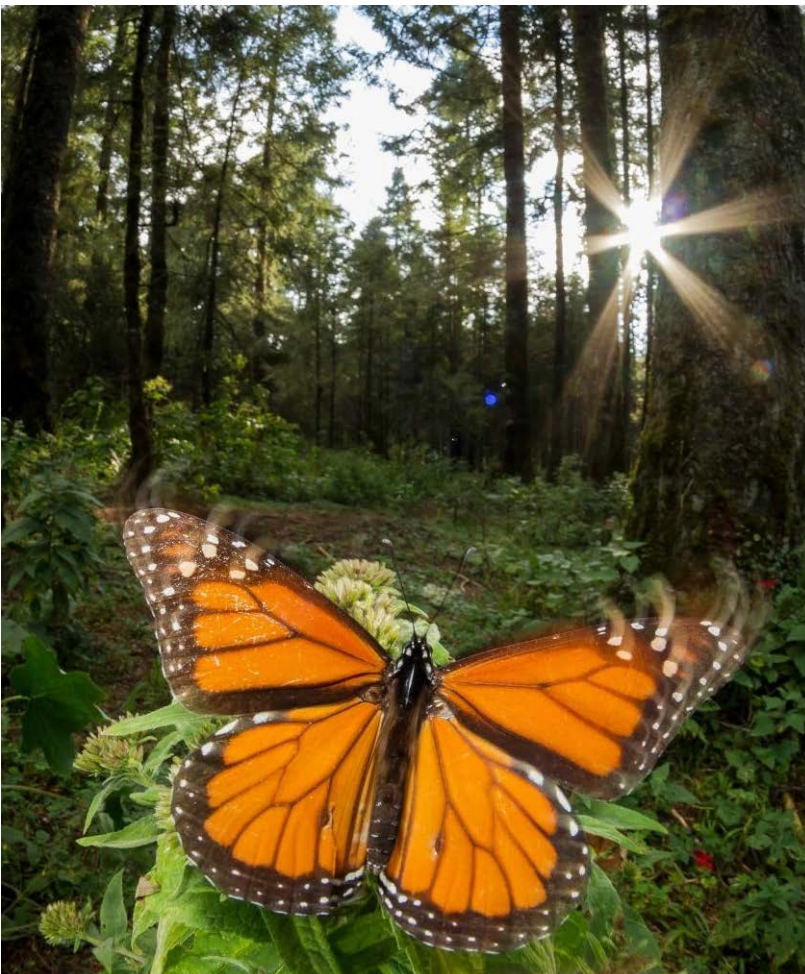
I hope there is something here that meets with you, and encourages you to grow your singularity, and know your unmet need for ecstatic belonging. And I hope you will let my love fail you. By noticing the failures and inadequacies of my imperfect love, I invite your indignation. May every frustration energe our longing for more and better love, so that we each find the love only we can manifest, within and around us.

I find joy and excitement on this path of embodied love. In moments of ecstatic belonging, I find serenity and certainty. My longing for belonging guides me home, again and again, – even in the midst of the world's bad news. The particles of us, and the biotic systems we partake of, already know how to do this. Ecstatic belonging is ever-emergent, at every level. It is submolecular, in the hadrons and atoms of us. It is metabolic. It's in our DNA. It guides our multicellular existence. It is ever-emergent in ecosystems.

If we walk the path of embodied love together, our fear can get right-size. We can heal the impact of trauma. We can meet ongoing traumas with more resource, together, instead of further traumatizing one another. We can make mistakes and find repair. We can join with the more-than-human world, and learn its love languages. What you bring to this path matters as much as what I bring. There are

no competencies we need to manifest, to join this inquiry; there are no incompetencies we need to hide. We can belong to ourselves, each other and the process. Come walk the medicine path with me.

I am
Not
a
Teacher
Here



Caffyn Jesse

Caffyn Jesse is a queer elder, sacred intimate and writer who revels in the power and pleasures of the erotic. They are actively exploring connections and intersections between psychedelic medicine, transformative justice, somatic sexual wellness and queer ecology.

Caffyn is the author of many books including *Intimacy Educator*, *Science for Sexual Happiness*, *Orientation: Mapping Queer Meanings and Elements of Intimacy*.

She offers online programs through her website EcstaticBelonging.com. They are now retired from a longtime role as a teacher of somatic sex education.

Photo of Caffyn and Peek a by Paula Stromberg

