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## **Get naked and come in (me Betty, Carlin and reality versus fantasies that can come true)**



Betty Dodson was the mother of Bodysex, an intensive workshop to work in community masturbation as a way to experiment with one's body, free oneself from shame and appropriate pleasure. My goals when I attended were to break out of a relationship and break new ground into my job as a sexologist.

"Get naked and come in". Those were the first words I heard. "Your Raffaella from Chile? I bet Betty you'd be the first. You'll get certified, right?" said Carlin Ross. The entrance was a hallway with silver hangers, I chose one and left my belongings. Since the creation of *Bodysex* in the 1970s, thousands of people had performed the same rite.

The corridor led to a large and bright room, with a soft carpet, where there were now fifteen BackJack Floor chair forming a circle. Next to each chair was a tray with napkins, water, tissues, almond lube, implements for the experience of pleasure and masturbation. There was also a small library, and a fireplace with an altar with candles, drawings of

vulvas and what I think are reminders of her life. On the walls hung paintings painted by Betty: portraits of her naked mother and other drawings

## **The Master**

Betty Dodson was a sexologist, teacher, master, visual artist, educator, author of books like *Sex for One: The Joy of Selfloving and Orgasms for Two: The Joy of Partnersex*, and **the mother of Bodysex**, an intensive workshop to work in community masturbation as a way to experiment with your own body, free yourself from shame and appropriate pleasure.

In this same spacious apartment on Madison Avenue in New York, during the 1970s Betty began conducting orgies with her former partner, Federico Dodson. Talking with a vodka with Betty, I found out later that Andy Warhol went once to some orgies. But she, far from being seduced by stardom, she heated it: "He was only going to take pictures of the chaos and then paint it".

In those years, Betty created Bodysex, both for women who enjoy their sexuality and want to learn more through this shared experience, as for those who want this pleasured experience, but do not know how to achieve it. And for a couple of decades, until the late 1980s, this disentangled, feminist woman made Bodysex her trench of struggle against guilt, shame, fear and rejection of one's body, teaching women of all ages and from all corners of the world to love and feel secure of themselves and have orgasms while doing so. She then took a long break and started again ten years ago, shortly after turning eighty.

## **Self-love**

Soon after starting this new stage of workshops, Betty met Carlin Ross, the woman who opened the door to me at the Madison Avenue apartment and invited me to undress. It was 2006, Carlin was married and had a successful career as a lawyer on Wall Street, when she first attended a Bodysex workshop and decided to change her life. She left her husband, quit her job and partnered with Betty, expanding the reach of these workshops, certifying women around the world who want to join the work (and community) of Bodysex, replicating or adapting these experiences to their own territories.

The format of the workshops remains the same. Fifteen (less or more) naked women, sitting in a circle, talking intimately about intimacy, about their bodies, vulvas, desires and fragilities (envy, fears, doubts) at the same time learning to touch themselves with confidence in a safe space.

The circle is a protected space, of self-care and self-knowledge, in which to safely explore the relationship of each one's bodies, vulvas, sexuality, desire and joy. Masturbation is understood here as an act of self-love and affirmation of the autonomy of pleasure.

Betty, as an amazing master, educates in art, philosophy, history, biology, emotions, while teaching ways to touch and breathe. The women who participate learn together, are linked organically; feel their own vulvas and clitoris, observe and talk about the changes in their vulvas, seek orgasms in different ways and intensities, in whatever state they are and with any emotion that appears. Because, as Betty transmits, to have orgasms are not necessary states or specific emotions, as I teach too in my psychotherapy, you can touch yourself with grief, anger, joy, fear.

Some of the objectives of the workshop are to overcome shame, rejection towards the body itself, fear of losing or having too much control, anxiety to reach orgasm that goes against the enjoyment of excitement. And in this way to enhance pleasure. My goals were to start a relationship and open new paths to my work as a sexologist.

## **Back to the body**

I was having a hard time. I felt stagnant, my relationship was tortuous, I had constant cold, headaches and wadding pains. He needed something to die so that something else could be born. He knew that any change had to start with the body. And then, on the same day, two extraordinary opportunities appeared. My friend José Vidal, choreographer and dancer, invited me to join his dance company in a creation project based on Dante's The Divine Comedy. "Do you want to move again? You would have to attend all the rehearsals, leave at least part of your practice and adjust the schedules. Are you willing? Think it over and answer me..."

I had nothing to think about. I could dance again in my forties! I got on the subway crying with excitement. And when I got home, I was waiting for an email from Carlin Ross telling me that I was accepted to go and get certified with Betty.

I had applied months ago, after knowing the work of Bodysex through the therapist Almudena Martínez. For me it was a dream. I would go to New York to take the workshop for a weekend, spend a few more days studying alone with Betty and then I would have to develop a thesis that I could write in Chile.

The only obstacle was the money. The two-day workshop cost \$1,200; an individual session, another \$1,500; and two days of intensive study with Betty (by myself), talk about a privilege. To that should be added two trips to New York, for the workshop and for the presentation (workshop) of my thesis at a Menla Retreat. Just now, because of the dance, I could work less time on a paid basis. It was a mess. I would have to ask (another) credit from the bank. But that didn't discourage me. Despite the financial effort I would have to make, I was so fucking happy and my two sons were too, happy and proud, as they say.

When I told my partner about that moment, his reaction was hostile. In part it was thanks to that hostility that I dared (at last!) to leave that relationship that did not bring anything good to my life. Instead, José Vidal, my sons Gabriel and Roberto (yeahh single mom of two), friends, family told me how proud they were of me. In general, people who know me and love me well, understood that this was an opportunity for growth and liberation, congratulated me and were happy for me.

### **Dressed in lipstick**

After Carlin Ross invited me to undress, I took off my clothes, nervous. In order not to feel so naked I left my earrings and a red necklace, and I painted my mouth with a Ruby Woo lipstick. All very red, blood red. Then I took my notebook, a pencil and a towel, and I went from the room of the chairs in a circle to a room from where they were calling me.

It was Betty's bedroom. At one end was her bed; at the other was a desk and a shelf full of books. There were my two hostesses, naked, each sitting on a towel. Betty, at 86, looked splendid, comfortable, happy and full of vitality. Imitating them, I folded my towel and took a chair. As soon as I sat down, they started asking me about my life. Much more than details about my work, my motherhood, my studies or my emotional situation, they wanted to know what I was like and what I was doing there.



The circle of the vulvas Counting Betty and Carlin, that weekend would be 15. Women of different sizes, shapes, races, religions, sexual orientations and nationalities. Each with its own particular motivation. A woman who had never seen her vulva, a trans man who came to say goodbye to his. The youngest of the attendees was 26; the oldest, 78. The five

continents were represented. We joined the search for new wisdom and the feeling that something important had already been set in motion.

Some more nervous than others, we all went through the "undress and enter", and, from the beginning, without traps, we were slowly entering the nudity. There wasn't much to hide behind. When we got naked, we not only took off our clothes, but also some defense mechanisms. The lipstick was no longer just a stain on my lips, the hoops an extension of the ear and tattoos a fragment of my life journal exposed to be read.

Together we form a circle, a closed space in which to share thoughts, secrets, personal stories, traumas, desires, searches, yearnings for liberation and pleasure. We sat, as Betty told us, in the position of the goddess: crossed legs, straight back, tits outside. And we started with breathing exercises to coordinate the group in the same rhythm.

I remember staring at a vulva-shaped black candle that had brought the colorine to my left. It was lit on a silver tray located in the center of the circle, next to the traditional white candles that Betty keeps burning, symbolizing purity and healing.

We were complete strangers, but there we were, naked, eating strawberries and cheeses, and talking about our private lives, our bodies and the breaks that had brought us there.

## **Show and Tell**

After entering confidence, we begin one of the most important rituals in Bodysex: Show and Tell (sample and account). It's about looking between your legs, showing yourself the vulvas and talking about them, of their different sizes, shapes, colors and styles, so exquisitely varied! Just that, just to recognize that this diversity exists, is a holy remedy against the feelings of shame that many have been carrying.

With the help of a round mirror and a lamp, we recognize each part of the vulva, while the others look. Betty characterizes each vulva based on drawings from Master and Johnson's first book on the sexual response: Gothic, Renaissance, modern, Baroque, Heartfelt, and more. They each choose a special name for their own. That day was born in my body Anais, name associated with fertility, sacred prostitution, healing, wisdom, considered Goddess of War.

During this exercise some cried with emotion, others sincere the rejection they had always felt for their vulvas. Every time one said something even slightly negative, another spontaneously countered: "What a great clitoris!" "Look at the texture of those lips!" "Form a perfect heart". "That pink tone is amazing!" Even a piece of toilet paper stuck to Betty's lips was a cheerful laugh: "Oh, how beautiful, it comes with a surprise gift!".

## **Like drops of water**

I want to highlight one person in particular. We talked in the kitchen while preparing the food. He told me he wanted to apologize to my country through me. Shortly after the coup, he had come to Chile with a group of comrades with the idea of fighting the military dictatorship. They arrived in Punta Arenas. But he did not manage to do anything like a fight, so much violence and so much fear, that he returned earlier than planned to his home in California. She told me that the guilt had accompanied her all these years, and that she needed to tell me because I was the first Chilean she came across.

At the time of showing our genitals, she sat next to Betty and began to cry. Her lips were like two large drops of water. For years he thought they were a testicular malformation. Despite the opinion of all the doctors he had consulted, he still felt deformed. This limited her sexuality to the point that, at over seventy, she was still a virgin and had never been fondled. She had now been diagnosed with what I think it was a difficult cancer and this was an act of bravery in the face of death.

Minutes before showing us her vulva, it had been the turn of another woman with lips very similar to hers, this one seemed perfectly fine with her vulva and at no time questioned its form. When it came to her, her cry was one of purge and emotion for having found what she was looking for. Maybe this relief helped her fight her illness, because when I wrote to ask her if she could share her story, she told me that her cancer was in remission.

## **An erotic break**

The second day we met again in a circle and we told how we felt after the first day. Most of us described how well we slept. Then, Carlin gave us a demonstration of the Rock and Roll orgasm: fantasy, deep and rhythmic breathing while exercising the pelvic floor muscle, and vaginal penetration with Barbell, a stainless-steel tool specially designed by Betty.

Then came the background dish: Erotic Recess, a group masturbation ritual. Some we use the hand; others, the legendary vibrators Magic Wand of Hitachi (always with condom). These tools were on the trays next to us, along with almond oil, gloves, lubricants and disposable tissues, for every personal need.

One of the most exciting aspects of Erotic Recess was the wave of orgasms: when one woman started to cum and her moans reverberated through the circle, another came and then another, resulting in fantastic harmony. Women sound like goddesses when they have real orgasms. A sense of play permeated the room. It was pure joy. And crying and laughter.

In that circle I was the woman on the left, on the right and in front of someone. I couldn't stop having orgasms, old and new. My voice exclaimed something like "Oh, my God!" I thought in a low voice, but Carlin said to me later: "I knew you would be one of the

screamers! Great moaner!" My painted Ruby-Woo lips frowned, perfect and trembling, of pleasure and security.

It was the first time I spent more than five hours just masturbating. I felt no performance anxiety and had full-body orgasms. I discovered that I could have one orgasm after another, and that, with each new orgasm, my body is sensitized a little bit more, and more inside. Until I got blood on my face!

But best of all was the opportunity to observe the sex life of other women in action, through a lens without filters. See us experience, enjoy, without seeking to impress or seduce. Simple and yet intense. That night we all went drinking to close the workshop. But the experience wouldn't end yet for me, I had a week of work left alone with Betty.

I was there, I did that and I got the T-shirt. The next day, Betty was waiting for me naked, smoking and having coffee. We talked for a while about my work and then she showed me her photo albums, told me stories about her life and the birth of Bodysex one on one (one by one). He showed me how, with all delicacy, he asks for access to the body of the woman with whom he works, how he guides her, confirming step by step the consensus, teaching her to touch and feel her body to enter the pleasure. I gave myself body and soul to the experience. As the T-shirt that gave me that day "I masturbated with Betty Dodson"; that is, "I masturbated with Betty Dodson". Although in my case I should say rather: "I masturbated Betty Dodson".

## It's your turn

After two days of talking, learning, laughing, sharing and working with BETTY DODSON, she stopped me on my questions and told me that she wanted to know more about my work. "I've taught this for a lot of years! You know more about other things including biology and psychology. Can you "give me" (explain me with actions) your sensorial and sexuality workshop, could you? What do you need?" To my surprise, I said yes. I explained to her that it was a sensorial workshop, that through body exercises, a tour of what sexuality has meant to each woman through her life story is made. I told her about Mirén Bustos (a bad ass woman like her, who didn't give a fuck, just that every person who came to our consult had to gain something), she always says don't think about how you dress, talk simple and be close to the persons you work with they are my first teacher, who trained me as a individual, couples and sexual psychotherapist. I told her I that women didn't have to undress. "Done, translate your information and let's do it," she replied.

On the way out, I grabbed my bike and flew to Brooklyn. I worked ass fast as I could translating and preparing the materials, and then I went to buy fruit, chocolate, and blindfolds, she was waiting with a vodka to celebrate.

Everything turned out as expected. Or better. It was the first “workshop” I did in English and Betty Dodson was there, trusting in my work, generous, humble, surprised at what was new to her. When we finished, she said to me:

"This is your thesis, you must unite Bodysex and your workshop”, maybe just start by making your women start getting naked at the end of your sensorial workshop and then, little by little they will be full naked and ready to share a Bodysex experience”.

Do not separate them, you have one unite them, you know a lot, and you’re a great therapist. I cried so much, I felt validated for my work for one of my first times. "And then, "I want us to party." She took me to the kitchen and served two large glasses of vodka with orange juice. I felt so close to her and her work, Carlin wasn’t there but her generosity I knew it was the same, I knew I was entering a new family. Then she said "I’ll send you to my one of my favorite places near my home”.

## **A pagan ritual**

I entered a building, the fifth floor, the doors opened. Inside vodka with orange juice were waiting in a Korean sauna. I took a steam bath and massaged by four hands. I thought I was living a pagan rite of passage. I was grateful for everything that could take me to Chile from her workshop; and she, what I could bring to the Bodysex community. We were connected beyond age differences, life experience, body type, place in the world, moment of life. Nothing mattered except who we were, what we liked, what we wanted to offer and how we could support ourselves. We were united through our sexual power, our orgasms and the desire to educate and make visible what we do. And most importantly, we both questioned how one should be a woman. I had forgotten, but she and her people reminded me. Nothing mattered except who we were, what we liked, what we wanted to offer and learned and how we could support ourselves. We were united through our sexual power, our orgasms and the desire to educate and make visible what we do and constantly learn. And most importantly, we both questioned how one should be as a woman, professional, sexual person, emotional woman, single mother, abused and also being loved. I had forgotten, my life was on a pause, but she and her community reminded me.

I knew this experience would be important to me, but I didn’t suspect the magnitude. The teenager and woman came back strong. For a moment, I wanted to give up my life in Chile and stay in New York, the city where anything was possible. The alternative was to open up spaces of possibility in my country. I chose the second that day. I returned to Chile, I did my thesis with bibliography of Wilhelm Reich, of Lacan, of Jung, but also of several Chileans like Carmen Cordero, Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela. I returned to New York to get certified and today I do versions of the workshops designed with Betty in Chile. I sometimes regret coming back, but I know I will be working in New York soon, Bodysex for the latin community in New York is my next dream. I feel that the work I have to do here is necessary and urgent, but I have to finish my life with that other dream coming true.

## **A sexual/erotic/teached party**

A few years later, I met Betty and Carlin again. She celebrated her nineties in Menla, near Woodstock, in the state of New York. When I checked the website of the place where the meeting would be, I saw that it was a Buddhist center located between forests and rivers, with a huge library, large halls, hundreds of animals, where spiritual retreats were made. It made me laugh. I knew there was going to be action. There would be BDSM, fucking machines, shibari, tantric massage, group masturbation.... And so much more that I didn't know. How could such a feast fit in a place built for silence, meditation, renunciation of desire, jajajajaj I loved that action that Betty does with her "run the fuck". At least the garden food promised by the site could serve as a hangover. And the landscape was fantasy.

## **Each one would show their talents**

I would do a sensorial workshop for forty approximately women from all over the world. On the bus from New York, I came across two guests, one from Israel, one from Berlin. All three of us were anxious. I had two days to finish preparing my workshop. I brought everything I needed: red wine, quince, breads, cheeses, images of goddesses, testimonies of the people I have worked with. I felt more confident than the first time: I had incorporated in me the language of Mirén Bustos and the wisdom of Bodysex, we would do exercises of Carmen Cordero that I mastered and had some more years of practice; but still I was nervous. So, fucking nervous.

The first night there was a dinner and then a sexed party. I decided not to go to the party as I wanted to be fit for the morning temazcal ritual. I remember some girls who didn't know what a temazcal ritual was and some came with a hangover laughing so much when they realize what was coming, that day started with such a happy and intense moment. Betty was walking around naked, smoking, which by the way was forbidden in some spaces, but as she said, "don't give a fuck".

Inside the temazcal, I looked for a damp and fresh corner; knowing that the heat would be strong. When hot stones came in the second time, some women left and others entered. At that moment a goddess entered with the most beautiful light I have ever seen. I didn't know her name, I couldn't stop looking at her, my heart was happier, my blood was running and when I heard her voice, I fell in deep love.

Kate, she was and I Kate. The girl who sat in front of me.

When it was her turn to introduce herself, she said she needed her family to accept her as a queer woman. She cried. Her honest tone of voice made me fall in love, I couldn't stop looking at her, hearing her. I decided to talk just so she would look at me for a second, and she did. In the days that followed I didn't want to separate myself from her, trying every excuse to be near her. At one point we connected, she helped me preparing my workshop, I looked at her empowerment practicing her flogging in a black sexy outfit, I participated in my first tantra fire ritual with Barbara Carrellas, had my first orgasm with just Ashley's Manta's energy, I got on my first Sybian ride with Laura Bogush. Some practiced BDSM, we danced, we masturbated, we did tantra, we were drawn, we took pictures, we practiced yoga, we bathed in the river. We kissed, we hugged, I fell in love (at least I fell in love). Of all the loves that I have had in my life, this is one that I treasure, and I hope she feels that love from me to her, and always find a way to keep connected with that amazing human.

### **¡Thank you, Betty!**

Betty saw me and showed me who I am; she recognized my work and my love; she celebrated me; she helped me to trust myself and the world; she gave me a community of unique, free, generous women; she gave me a family that cares for me where there are no fairy tales or ornaments. Since I met her, my life hasn't stopped having a new purpose and helping me to get better. I have new patients, from other countries; I keep dancing; my twins are happy, big, curious... are fine, with me at home. I have been able to talk about those things that had me choking, I set limits to what hurts me. Yes, I still lack. I lack the love of a partner, which I miss, I still have sorrow and a very tight bond with death and anxiety.

But luckily my life is not resolved! If it's still missing, it's because there are adventures ahead.

Betty died on October 31, 2020, aged 91. This is my small tribute to my teacher and the testimony of how a workshop (a human encounter) can change our lives.

Now the community is still alive and we have Carlin ross to thank for that and every woman that has experience and loved what Bodysex means, love, pleasure, security, emotions, life, liberty.....