

n a Bel Air mansion in LA, the kind of place Jacqueline Susann sent her most ruthless characters to live, California's latest sex guru, Nicole Daedone, is talking to a group of spellbound followers: "We've been using orgasm to blow off steam, but imagine if we could harness its energy — like harnessing the rays of the sun! It would be limitless, sustainable and truly transformative!"

There's always a slight sense of unreality about Los Angeles. Nicki Minaj and Elton John have both shot videos in this white marble villa, but it is unlikely that the experience will have been as far-out as this five-day "intensive" that costs about \$3,500 per person.

Six couples sit in a circle by the neoclassical pillars and listen to Daedone, 48, talk about the 10 different areas of the clitoris, each one apparently offering nuanced emotions, from "relaxation" to "reverence". Yes, really. This is avant-garde stuff, but these are advanced students who have already learnt the core message of Daedone's company, OneTaste: that they should be reaching for "alphagasm", or orgasms that are much more than a split-second of climax. She teaches this through a controversial practice called orgasmic meditation (OM), a sort of yoga-meets-sex. During the class, a man or "stroker" will stimulate "the upper left-hand quadrant" of a woman's clitoris for a set period of 15 minutes, while Daedone, or someone who works for her, explains how to do it. Rather than experience a brief high followed by nothing, and then, possibly, a feeling of sadness, Daedone's method promises you a reliable 15 minutes of hovering in out-of-body free-fall bliss. She tells me later: "I want the word 'orgasm' to trip off people's lips as easily as words like 'yoga' and 'meditation' do now."

Daedone's vibe is "Wall Street analyst meets San Francisco crystal child" and she's great at handling a crowd. Her 2011 TED Talk, "Orgasm: the Cure for Hunger in the Western Woman", has been watched by more than 1.2m people on YouTube, and her classes attract high-end professionals and Silicon Valley executives. Guest speakers at her events include the likes of Naomi Wolf. OneTaste has become one of the fastest growing private businesses in America, according to the Inc. 5000 list. This year it celebrates its 15th birthday, and Daedone claims that \$20m in revenue is in sight.

OneTaste is now in 39 cities globally, including London. Its location is usually in north London, although it is secretive about specifics as there has been trouble in the past when the owners of the spaces it hires find out that these are not run-of-the-mill yoga classes. You can sign up for a one-day induction class for £147. This teaches you the basics of OM; subsequent practice

Fancy an ALPHAGASM?

A bog-standard orgasm isn't enough these days — Silicon Valley execs are paying up to \$3,500 to take their pleasure to the next level. *Stephanie Theobald* picks up some tips

THE FOUR RULES OF ORGASMIC MEDITATION

1 It's OK to say no To take part in OM you have to choose a "stroker". At an OM class, a man might approach you and say: "Would you like to OM?" Don't feel bad if you decline.

2 You have a Lamborghini between your legs The woman lies on a yoga mat with her pants off while the man talks clinically about what he sees. The idea is that you hear yourself being described without feeling judged, and you realise the power of what you have between your legs.

3 You pay for your pleasure You will have to buy the One Stroke lube (£15 a jar). The initial induction course is £147, but you will be encouraged to take other courses. The level two weekend course (£495), for instance, promises to teach you about "healing" ("Transmute your shame and trauma into power", "Discover the rich lessons of your relationship history"). "Intensives" can cost more than £2,500.

4 Orgasm for breakfast OM is aimed at the "tired and wired" female demographic. "Women are, like, 'I work too hard, I drink too much, I shop too much, yet there's a sense of hunger I can't touch,'" says Daedone. She advises an OM to kick-start the day.

sessions are free, although you will be strongly encouraged to take further courses.

Still, 10 regions to the clitoris? For many women, whose partners have difficulty even finding their clitoris, this will seem a mind-boggling concept. Yet it's great to know that there's somebody out there trying to help men and women get as sophisticated about the female pleasure centre as they are about their cars or their shoes. I have to admit, when I went to the induction OM day in north London, things didn't go swimmingly. The man I chose as my stroker, a council housing officer from Southwark, didn't seem to know where my clitoris was, let alone where the upper left-hand quadrant might be located.

One London IT guy I spoke to summed up why the UK chapter is growing (attendance at intro courses has grown from 10 people a class in 2012 to 80 today). "I have this sense that there must be more to sex than endless one-night stands," he said. "I want to be with my wife for the rest of my life. I don't want sex toys. I want to go deeper, somehow."

As for women, OM targets the "tired and wired" demographic. OM gets them to access their sexuality, be unashamed about expressing it and letting the power of that filter through to other areas of their life, from their career to being able to deal with the kids better. At the end of my second practice session, a lawyer who was an experienced OMer told me matter-of-factly that her clitoris had physically grown in size since she started coming to classes. She was delighted. "My body feels less 'creaky'," she said. "I'm now always turned on and ready for sex."

One of Daedone's LA staff tells me: "You can use OM in your sex life as one of your tools, along with BDSM and fluffy handcuffs, or you can take it further. You can awaken something deeper."

Planet Daedone may seem eccentric, yet the orgasm industry has been gathering pace on the West Coast of America. A recent fuel injection came courtesy of omgyes.com, the new \$4.6m website based in San Francisco, championed by Emma Watson, that teaches women (and their men) how to experience a selection box of orgasms with the help of interactive video. The refreshing thing about Daedone, when I finally meet her over water and granola bars for her first UK interview, is that she is open about, well, what a crazy idea this all is. Finding enlightenment through the clitoris? "I know, insane, right?" she says.

Her analogy for how spiritual sex is going to develop is to consider the way health-food culture has evolved: "Spiritual sex today is like health-food stores in the 1970s — it's not packaged for the mainstream." She intends to change that, believing that, "the OM movement will soon reach the level of the whole-foods movement".

Daedone, born and raised in northern California, once dreamt of being a Buddhist nun. But the problem was, she liked sex. As a twentysomething, she became au fait with vibrators and dildos of every kind. "I came of age in San Francisco, and I thought I'd done it all." But then she met a Buddhist at a party who suggested she try an "ancient sexuality practice". She took off her trousers and lay there thinking, "Is my stomach too big? He's kind of creepy. I wonder if we'll get married..." Then suddenly her body took over, and she was in another dimension.

She admits that she enjoys teaching the "masters of the universe" in Silicon Valley. "The tech people don't have empathy, and they're building technology that is going to be bigger than us, and we don't want it to squash us like a mosquito. OM is really good for helping develop empathy, compassion and generosity." ●