

# **Sex AND YOUR Stars**

**A Sexologist's Guide to the  
Erotic Energy of the Zodiac**

**Stefanie Iris Weiss**

 **sounds true**  
BOULDER, COLORADO

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# Introduction

## Why Explore the Sex in Our Stars?

Sex energy and creative energy are parts of the same life force that draws us to it like the warmth of a summer sun or the light of a full moon.

**Betty Dodson**

*Sex for One: The Joy of Selfloving*

As above, so below.

**Astrological Proverb**

**H**umans have looked to the stars for guidance since we emerged from the primordial muck, and we've probably wrestled with our sexual desires for just as long. From the Babylonians to the Chinese, the Hellenistic, Islamicate, Mayan, and Vedic branches, to the Greeks and Romans, the astrologers of the European Renaissance, and finally to our own twenty-first-century star-whisperers making viral internet memes, astrology has been a lens for our relationships and sensual longings since the beginning of time.<sup>1</sup>

As we love and long to be loved, desire and long to be desired, connect and long to be connected, we often seek to understand both *why* and *how*. Poets, philosophers, and songwriters might give us some insight, but astrology, I've learned, can get us down into the deep, dirty, and decisive details.

This ancient art shows us how our natal chart (the planetary map astrologers draw based on a person's date, time, and place of birth) works as the cosmic fingerprint of our psyche. This can provide surprisingly

accurate and penetrating insights into the question of when, how, and why we want what we want across our lifetimes and, helpfully, across the astrological seasons of each year.

Questions I often hear from astrology and clinical sexology clients tend to go something along these lines: “How can I live my richest, most fulfilled life sexually, relationally, and creatively?” If we’re attracted to someone, experience pangs of romantic love, or want to be touched in a particular way, we might ask ourselves: Where did this longing come from? When we fantasize and masturbate, we may wonder why certain scenes play through our minds and turn us on. When we connect to another human deeply but nonsexually, we might similarly ask: Why are my feelings platonic? And central to working through all of this, when we experience shame about our desires or sexual experiences, we might ask ourselves: Is this my upbringing, my culture, my genetics, or is there something more to deconstruct?

### **The Shadow-Banning of Astrology and Sexuality Through History**

Sexology is the scientific study of human sexuality, interests, and behaviors. Long before the formal field of scientific sexology existed as a discipline, and in eras and within cultures where exploration of sexuality was forced into hiding, astrology was often there, giving us coded answers to our most secret, subversive questions. Like witchcraft and other occult practices, astrology has also been periodically forced underground; but like our natural, normal human desires, it persists.

Even in the third decade of the new millennium, where the future is now, some archconservative movements condemn astrology as the work of the devil. For me, both astrology and sexology (an inherently inclusive, queer-coded field) are threats to the heteropatriarchy and other systemic forms of oppression. What I love about both professions is that they aim to set individuals free to make their own choices and to be rulers of their own fates and desires—at least the way I practice them.

This book is about sexual self-knowledge and pleasure, and I can’t let it go unsaid: we must fight the fascist forces coming for the rights of the

most marginalized people in our society, because everyone's sexuality is sacred, not shameful.

### **The Origins of Sexology**

The formal academic discipline of sexology offers insight, depth, and peer-reviewed research when you're seeking counsel about your own sexuality or have questions about your sexual relationships. Sexology emerged as an academic discipline around the turn of the twentieth century, and over the last hundred-plus years, trailblazers from Alfred Kinsey (father of the Kinsey Scale) to Betty Dodson (groundbreaking proponent of women's masturbation) to Shere Hite (pioneering clitoris advocate) to my mentor, Dr. Patti Britton (the fabulous mother of sex coaching), have grappled with the science of sexuality, healing our intimate lives in the process.

If you're worried about some aspect of your sexuality or are seeking enhanced pleasure, the guidance of a certified clinical sexologist, trained sex coach, or sex therapist can be invaluable. Books and other self-enrichment tools are fantastic adjuncts for any journey to sexual sovereignty, but nothing can replace this expert professional context when you're in acute distress about a sexual matter. The resources section in this book includes information about how to find someone to work with, if you're ready for that step.

This book relies on research and time-tested tools that sexologists and sex coaches use in their practices, and also incorporates my training and professional work as a certified clinical sexologist and ongoing training in somatic sexology, not to mention my decade as a sex writer, reading and researching the literature on this juicy, fascinating topic.

From low libido to erectile dysfunction to mismatched desire to communication breakdowns to dating deficits, so much of what I see in my practice can be addressed when we work through the shame we retain about our sexuality from childhood and regressive cultural tropes we continue to encounter as adults. Even the most progressive, liberal, erudite, and sexually experienced of us know what shame feels like. You might be surprised at how your seemingly uber-confident and sexually sophisticated friend really feels when they're naked and getting it on.

If you feel like you know less about sex than you'd like to or have experienced less of it, you're far from alone.

I can't begin to tell you how many self-defined libertines, sex party regulars, and owners of drawers full of the latest sex tech—those who've made exploring their sexuality into a personal quest—have come to me in search of answers about long-standing shame they can't quite purge. Exploring sexuality brings out our vulnerabilities; that's part of why it's such liberatory personal work. How have we achieved a breakthrough? In many cases, by diving into their astrology charts.

### **Combatting Sexual Impostor Syndrome with Astrology**

One of my favorite sex therapists and authors, Yana Tallon-Hicks, coined the phrase “sexual imposter syndrome” in her book *Hot and Unbothered: How to Think About, Talk About, and Have the Sex You Really Want*. Like the kind of impostor syndrome we might experience when we're at a new job or just don't believe we deserve success, this phrase succinctly summarizes what we may feel when we try to show up in our sex lives without having worked through our shame.

Understanding your unique astrology archetype can give you a kind of cheat sheet for the way that shame might appear in your life—and in your sex life. We can usually find the roots of our sexual imposter syndrome in our charts, the same way we can find our childhood experiences, parenting, and relationship patterns in our charts. *Sex and Your Stars* will help you explore and expunge the shame you're holding onto, no matter where you are in your sexual journey.

Something I find myself saying to clients, repeating in workshops, and writing over, and over, and over again: *sex always begins with your relationship to your own body*. Learning what feels good may seem like it should be a “natural” process, but often, it's buried in layers of shame and societal ideas of what we're “supposed” to look and feel like, no matter our sexual or gender identity, race, ability, age, or body type.

The truth is that a healthy relationship to pleasure and embodiment (or the mind/body connection) takes work. Our nervous systems

are very often compromised by trauma, either personal or collective. Sometimes the process of letting ourselves melt into sensation feels like a soft unpeeling, but sometimes it feels like an unbearable chiseling. Using our astrological charts as a guide can help us lean into the softer side of the pleasure/embodiment continuum.

### **Sexual Astrology: A Way to See into the Erotic Self**

If we understand astrology to be a system of personality archetypes and their psychological correspondences, this practice can bring enormous depth to our understanding of the erotic self. Astrologers define *archetypes* in different ways, but I love Steven Forrest's definition from the glossary of his book *The Inner Sky*. He says an archetype is "a fundamental image held collectively and universally in human consciousness; the mythic raw material out of which individual identity is synthesized." Certainly not all people of the same Sun sign or other planetary placements embody all the layers of a particular archetype. But often, the ones that apply to you and your life will resonate so powerfully that the first time you learn about them, you might get the chills or laugh at the spot-on accuracy of it all.

My version of *sexual astrology* takes the modern, scientifically rigorous field of sexology and marries it to the ancient, perennial, and complex art of astrology. In my work with clients, I call this an *Erotic Energy Mapping* session, during which I share the many ways the natal chart illuminates our sexual selves. Together, these two fields can supplement and heighten your understanding of human longings, attractions, relationship patterns, and sexual boundaries or concerns.

A significant benefit of layering astrological knowledge into your understanding of human sexuality is this: it can help to reduce some of the shame you carry about your desires. How? When you are better versed in the psychosexual patterns common to your astrology chart, you might stop blaming yourself for issues that come up repeatedly in your relationships, attraction patterns, or even in the way your body reacts to sexual stimuli. This provides a more immediate, instant portal into our sexuality, a subject that can be fraught. If you seek to better understand



your own sexual urges, fetishes, blocks, and concerns, getting inside your natal chart can supplement and nourish that understanding, providing more pleasure.

Learning the basic astrological archetypes that may describe you, a long-term partner, casual hookup, or ex-lover you're not quite over can open vast landscapes of empathy and support that you can then extend to yourself and your beloved(s). Tapping into this astrological, erotic, and energetic matrix adds color and dimension to sex and relationships and has the power to unveil pleasure you've never accessed before. Knowing what might turn on, unlock, ease, and please us becomes a bit less loaded and a lot more fun.

For me, all astrology is a lived experience—and in the realm of sexual astrology, even more so. Understanding our sexual selves is a holistic experience, from our hearts to our minds to our erogenous zones (found all over the body) and genitals (although we can have plenty of sex that doesn't include our genitals). The aim of sexual astrology, as I understand and practice it, is to feel our charts in our bodies, rather than simply comprehending them intellectually or analyzing them from the proverbial psychoanalytic couch (although, trust me, I do plenty of this later in this book, too). The deeper we go into the archetypes of each sign and planet, the more we can feel them moving through us and recognize when an emotion, sensation, or desire invokes our natal chart or a current transit (how the orbiting planets interact with the natal chart). Making astrology into a lived experience can mean tracking the lunar cycles, tracking your menstrual cycles as they correspond to the lunar cycles, planting by the Moon, using herbs and foods that correspond to particular planets in your chart to strengthen them, observing the planets with a telescope, going out under the stars on clear nights to simply drink in their majesty, or masturbating or having sex when the planets interact with one of your sensitive natal planets. When you meet someone who, for no discernable reason, fires up your loins and later find out that their chart's Venus is in the same sign as your Mars—one of many possible examples of *sexual synastry* (a

way of putting people's charts together to see how the planets "talk" to one another)—that's making astrology into a lived experience, too.

### **My Journey to Astrology and Sexology**

Before I was a certified clinical sexologist or an astrologer, I was just a young writer trying to find my way; writing is what brought me to both professions. Astrology is a language of time-keeping, and I grew attracted to it, in part, because of its rich, riveting mythology and poetry. If you find yourself keeping company with astrologers, don't be shocked about the ubiquity of the poetry-to-astrology pipeline—it's a THING. A lot of people find their way to astrology through horoscopes—I found my way to it through the power of myth and metaphor. But don't get me wrong—I have written a LOT of horoscopes, and done well, they have great value. I began practicing astrology professionally around the year 2000 and began writing about sexuality around 2010. Writing about sex is something that I always wanted to do—this trait is in my chart!

Long before I was widely known as a sexuality expert and years before I published *Eco-Sex*, my first book about sex, my astrology clients often asked me questions about their sex lives and secret desires, questions they told me they weren't comfortable asking other practitioners or even their therapists. I always welcomed these erotic deep dives, but for a long time, I wasn't sure why they sought *me* out for this. By the time I had a column called *Sexual Healing* for a now-defunct website called *EcoSalon*, later delving into New York's sexual underground in reported pieces for *Narratively* and *The Daily Dot*, it became more common for clients to find me through my sex writing and then say, "Oh wow, you're also an astrologer!" Or it would be the opposite—my astrology clients would see a sexuality piece I posted on social media and message me to ask if they could come in for a session explicitly about sexual concerns they were having.

I was lucky to be raised in a household where conversations about bodies and sex were frank and easy—any questions I had were answered in an inherently practical, straightforward, shame-free way by my mom,

who was born and bred in the People’s Republic of Brooklyn (where they don’t have time for bullshit). My parents also owned a head shop called The Magic Cottage before I was born and briefly when I was a toddler, just so you can get a sense of my very-comfortable-with-human-bodies vibe.

When I was seven and saw a tampon on the bathroom sink, I asked what it was—and that led to my earliest conversation about reproduction and sex. We didn’t use cutesy terms for body parts in my house: when I was three, I knew that my vagina was a vagina, not a “vajayjay” or “down there” (although it took until adulthood for me to learn the difference between a vagina and a vulva). My mom laughs when I tell her that she’s the reason I became a sexologist, but there was a pretty clear pathway! This is all to say that before I formally began studying sexology, I was always comfortable and candid in astrology sessions when clients asked questions about intimacy issues, as comfortable as I’ve always been talking to my friends about sex. Once again, thanks, mom!

I began to blend sexuality into my astrological client work in the mid-aughts. My regular clients knew they could say something like “I’m not feeling turned on when my partner touches me” and get insight into a chart placement or transit without feeling weird or exposed. This, in part, is how I was able to build and refine the body of knowledge that informs the content of this book.

### **How I Do Astrology**

I’m a self-taught astrologer, and my early training (basically reading every book in print about astrology) and informal study with a few different mentors was in what we call “modern astrology,” with an emphasis on evolutionary and psychological astrology. You might sometimes hear “modern astrology” used pejoratively, as there’s been an online turf war between some people who study traditional astrology and those who came up as moderns. I steer clear of those wars. As traditional methods became more accessible in the last decade or so, I began to study those, too. Even though I’m a professional astrologer who has had thousands of clients, I’ll be learning new techniques for the rest of my life: that’s

how vast the astrological pantheon is. As someone who draws from the deep wells of both psychological and traditional astrology, I'm out here wishing we could all get along.

In the last thirty years, but more definitively since the early 2010s, there has been an absolute sea change in the way many Americans understand and experience astrology (coinciding with Neptune's transit through Pisces, not so incidentally). Astrology went from being a subculture, something only your hippy-dippy or LA friends were into, to being everywhere, all the time. *The New Yorker*, the *New York Times*, and *The Atlantic* covered the astrology boom with serious, reported pieces in the year or two before the pandemic.

Two things happened in the last thirty years that have likely changed the course of astrology forever. The internet and apps gave millions of people instant access to their own charts, right at their fingertips—suddenly, everyone knew their rising sign. My best friend and astrology partner and I had spent hundreds of brunches speaking the language of astrology prior to this era in the early 2000s, casually dropping “I will probably see him again even though his Saturn is on my Moon” over coffee and omelets in New York City, getting intense “What, are you some kind of weirdo?” side-eye. Suddenly, we started hearing the people at the table next to us *using the same language*—and we knew something unprecedented was happening.

Many, if not most, astrologers who've come to the profession in the last fifteen years or so learned their craft as students of traditional astrology,<sup>2</sup> which differs in fundamental ways from modern astrology, the astrological language I was first introduced to in the nineties. For example, as Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto were not yet discovered when the Greeks and Egyptians developed their techniques, these planets are not considered by those who exclusively practice traditional astrology. There are excellent arguments to be made for both ways of doing astrology, or of weaving them together like I do (and dozens of other ways of doing it, like Sidereal astrology, a different system based on the fixed stars), and this is not the place to historicize the debate between modern and traditional astrologers. However, I mention all of this so you know where I'm

coming from as an astrologer—which is to say that I use various analyses and techniques, sometimes in one session.

One important part of my methodology is key to this book: I practice astrology using the tropical zodiac, so my relationship to the zodiac and understanding of the signs is based on the seasons. Tropical astrology, practiced by most Western astrologers, considers the position of the Sun in relationship to the vernal equinox—the first day of spring, and in our parlance, zero degrees of Aries. Sidereal astrology considers the *precession* of the equinoxes, so the dates of each zodiac season continue to change over time. Vedic astrology, which uses the Sidereal system, originated in India some five thousand years ago, is still widely practiced there, and is increasingly popular among Western practitioners as well. Even Sidereal enthusiasts, however, can gain insights from *Sex and Your Stars*, because the astrological sign archetypes are present across disciplines. If you're interested in learning more about Sidereal astrology, the resources section offers some options.

In short, my concept of the zodiac is generated by the equinoxes and solstices that divide the year and is set up along the ecliptic of twelve signs through which the Sun passes. That's how we get Aries through Pisces, or Aries season through Pisces season. Note that even in the Southern Hemisphere, where the seasons are reversed, most Western astrologers rely on the tropical zodiac, so Aries season would always begin at the vernal equinox, when the amount of day and night is the same in both hemispheres.

### **Sun Signs and Sexuality**

The Sun is the heart of your astrology chart: this is the first (and often only) thing that most people know about their natal charts, mainly because it's easy and accessible information. When people ask you, "What's your sign?" what they're really asking is, "What's your Sun sign?"

We all revolve around our Sun, so it is near and dear to us. And yes, this book is called *Sex and Your Stars*, but we only have one star in this sweet little solar system of ours. As I mentioned, since astrology has become more popular and prominent, many people, especially