



**Wild & Sublime® Podcast, Season 2 Episode 25**  
**“Receiving and Giving More Pleasure with Betty Martin”**  
**June 3, 2021**

**“How would you like me to touch you?” Has anyone ever asked you that? Sex coach, former sex worker, and Wheel of Consent creator Betty Martin talks to Karen about her new book, 40 years of touching people, and how to practice giving and receiving pleasure.**

**Host: Karen Yates**

**Guests: Betty Martin**

[Wild & Sublime theme music]

Betty Martin

You know, it just uncovers so much about you and your relationship. And that can be hard. I mean, it can be hard to see this. Like, 'Oh my god, this is what I've been doing all these years,' or, 'Oh my gosh, this is where we're stuck.' So it creates a different layer of truth telling with this model.

Karen Yates

Welcome to Wild & Sublime, a sexy spin on infotainment®, no matter your preferences, orientation, or relationship style, based on the popular live Chicago show. Each week, I'll chat about sex and relationships with citizens from the world of sex positivity. You'll hear meaningful conversation, dialogues that go deeper, and information that can help you become more free in your sexual expression. I'm sex educator Karen Yates.

Today, I interview esteemed sex coach Dr. Betty Martin about her new book that helps you understand what exactly you're doing or not doing in bed, and how awareness can help open up new avenues of pleasure. Keep listening.

If you're a Wild & Sublime fan and love what we do, consider joining The Afterglow, our Wild & Sublime community on Patreon. For as little as \$5 a month, you get a bonus Q&A session with experts every month where you get to ask the questions, my weekly audio creator notes, and more. Plus, the gooey, happy feeling knowing that you are making the world a delightfully sexy place to live in. If a monthly membership is not

your thing, consider throwing some bucks in the tip jar in appreciation for our work. More info is in the show notes.

And I would like to give a super big shout-out to Jeff, the latest Wild & Sublime VIP member. He brings a lot of fun to our VIP hangouts, and I am supremely appreciative for his ongoing support. Thank you, Jeff!

Hey, folks, it looks like June will be book month at Wild & Sublime, as we interview some pretty cool authors about their work each week. I was so excited to be able to interview sex coach Dr. Betty Martin today, whose major career work, the development of the Wheel of Consent, is now in book form: "The Art of Receiving and Giving," which she wrote with Robin Dalzyn. The Wheel of Consent is based on very simple, touch-based games — and who doesn't like games? I know I sure do — that illuminates both sexual dynamics and interpersonal challenges by breaking them down into four quadrants of action. I am a major fan of this work. For people who are committed to self-development, I can't think of a better, more fascinating way to shine a light on unfulfilling relationship habits and also have some fun in the process. And as Martin points out in this interview, you do not have to do this with a sexual partner. You could do it with a friend or group, and actually, the first exercise you can do by yourself.

Dr. Betty Martin has been teaching the Wheel of Consent in her "Like a Pro" workshops for years, to countless sex coaches and educators, including myself, and I'm delighted to welcome her to the show. Enjoy.

Betty Martin, welcome.

Betty Martin  
Thank you!

Karen Yates

Very exciting to have you on. And as I said to you prior, I love this book so much, and I want folks to really understand why this is such an amazing, amazing concept that you have been working on, a life's work: the Wheel of Consent, and as well as the Three-Minute Game. So, "The Art of Receiving and Giving," your book. Who would benefit from this book?

Betty Martin  
Everybody, of course! [laughing]

Karen Yates

Of course! I mean, I would say the same thing, but, you know.

Betty Martin

I've had people ask me, "Is this just for practitioners?" And no, not at all. It's for anybody who wants to be more clear about the receiving and giving dynamic, and wants to have more fun. It's about a practice that takes two people to do the practice — two or more people. It's particularly useful if you're in relationship, but you're in relationship with many people. You know, your friends, neighbors, coworkers, people around the world. It affects all different kinds of relationships.

Karen Yates

Yeah. You know, one of the things that struck me — because I learned it through your "Like a Pro" workshop. But once you start getting clear with the concepts, you start seeing them applied in all transactions that you have with anybody. And by transactions, I just mean talking with someone. The thing I found so fantastic about this book — and the idea, more importantly — is that this is embodied. This is work that... You don't get through it by thinking your way through it. The exercises you have here are touch-based exercises, and the "ahas" come through the doing of the exercises.

Betty Martin

Absolutely.

Karen Yates

You know, we think we know ourselves.

Betty Martin

[laughs] Yeah, don't we?

Karen Yates

So we do these really simple exercises that it's like, "Oh, my God, I was entirely full of shit!" I mean—

Betty Martin

That's really — that's pretty much what happens.

Karen Yates

Yeah. The other thing that occurred to me — I don't know if anyone has said this to you — you started life, or your professional life, as a chiropractor. And it did occur to me that these simple exercises lock us into a position it's like, putting pleasure back into its natural position. So there's sort of like, chiropractic of pleasure. What do you think of that?

Betty Martin

I've never heard it put that way. But sure, why not? That's pretty good. I'll take it. Okay.

Karen Yates

Talk about consent. Not you, but like, when we all talk about consent, it's very dry. But this is super juicy. This is super sexy stuff. When you start doing these exercises, it can... You know, you were talking about couples, and what I thought when I was doing this work, I'm like, wow, this kicks you out of really bad habits, really bad touch habits, it kicks you out of unconsciousness. And once you start becoming alive in touch, so much starts happening,

Betty Martin

You know, some couples or partnerships, touch is a big part of the relationship, and some it's not. So it's not that, okay, suddenly you're going to be touching each other more, and you're going to be all over each other. It's not that. It's that, as you said, the doing of the exercises shows you where you're stuck, where you're lost, where you need some support, where you're already pretty good. You know, it just uncovers so much about you, and your relationship dynamics. And that can be hard. I mean, it can be hard to see this, like, oh my gosh, this is what I've been doing all these years. Or, oh my gosh, this is where we're stuck. And so it creates a different layer of truth-telling, which is not always easy. It can shake things up. And ultimately, it's liberating, because you clarify these dynamics that have been not working, but you couldn't figure out why. Suddenly you see why.

Karen Yates

The other thing you say near the end of the book is, this really isn't consent. It's agreement. And if you had it to do all over again, you would have called it the "Wheel of Agreement."

Betty Martin

[laughs] Too late now!

Karen Yates

Talk about the difference in your mind between agreement and consent.

Betty Martin

Well, I have been using consent to kind of mean agreement for a long time. And then, when I started writing the book, I thought I should probably look this up in the dictionary and see what consent really is! And what it says is that it's agreeing to what somebody else wants to do.

Karen Yates

Mmm!

Betty Martin

You agree to do this thing that someone wants you to do, or you agree to be done to in this way that somebody wants. And that's a useful skill to have. But it's only half the picture. So when you hear yourself, or someone, say, get consent, or give consent, that's what they're talking about. I give consent for this thing to happen. Or I get consent to do this thing that I want to do. It often gets equated with permission. Do I have consent to do this thing that I want to do? I'm asking for permission. And that fits in certain kinds of interactions, but doesn't fit in every interaction. So I use consent, generally, to mean agreement. But I think it's expanding the definition of the word. When you hear people talking about it and writing about it, it helps to remember that they may be using this other definition, which is agreeing to what somebody else wants.

Karen Yates

Your work is really about folks having a conversation. This is really about dynamic work.

Betty Martin

We've been talking about working with couples, or partners, or practice buddies, but if you're alone, it's also useful to read it, because you won't be able to do all the exercises, but you'll be able to do some of them, and you'll have some "ahas" coming out of it. So, I don't want to leave out people who are alone.

Karen Yates

Absolutely. Because I think the first exercise that is in the book is wildly important.

Betty Martin

You do it alone anyway.

Karen Yates

Yeah, you do it alone. And you set up — in the workshop that I attended, you set it up by drawing a picture of the brain, and then near the bottom of the paper, drawing a hand. And then there was like, a little highway, but then there was a big X. And you talked about, what's hijacking the superhighway between the brain and the hand? Can you talk a little bit about that hijacking?

Betty Martin

Oh yeah. That's a great question. Well, the exercise in the book and the workshops, we call "Waking Up the Hands." And it involves taking something into your hand, just an object sitting around you, a pen, or a shell, or a feather or something, and use your hand to feel it. Take in information about the thing, what does it feel like? And as you stay there with it, just fondling it, feeling it, exploring it, you'll notice different feelings come up, different thoughts come up. It becomes interesting. You start to notice, oh, it really doesn't matter what the thing is, it's just creating sensations in your hand. And the sensations in your hand become more interesting than the object itself. And for most people, after some time, it will become pleasant. And so, you're just using this pen to scratch your hand in a way that feels good to your hand. So your hand shifts from being an instrument to do things to becoming a source of pleasure for you. And then all kinds of things start clicking, click-click-click, in your brain. And so your question is, why aren't we ordinarily like that already? And the answer is, I think we're born that way. I don't know any small child who doesn't love to feel things. But we grow up being taught that pleasure is suspect. Sensory pleasure in particular, is suspect. And feeling things, and reaching out to things — "Don't touch that," "Look with your eyes, not with your hands." It's just a part of childhood growing up to mistrust our sensations. Some of us more than others, of course, depending on family and gender, and culture, and lots of things. But for most people, it takes some kind of fiddling around to find it again. And for some people, it's extremely difficult. It brings up tears, and shame, and guilt, and all kinds of things. And for the rare person, it's immediate and obvious. But not very many. Most of us have, to some degree, our sensory intake has been dampened by early experiences.

Karen Yates

You talked about how hands, mouth, and genitals are the three most nerve-rich areas of the body. And I found when I was doing this exercise, that it was absolutely mind-blowing. And some people I know do it as a daily meditative practice. Because it's really about opening up the nerves of the hands to fully take in pleasure at a level that can be profound. At least it was for me — it was really profound.

Betty Martin

Yeah, it very often is. I think this is one reason it's difficult, because it has nothing to do with anything. You're feeling up this pen, or this shell. It's not about love, not about sex. Nobody's giving you anything, nobody's doing anything to you. You're not giving anybody else anything. You're not creating, or doing something with your hand. It's just like, it has nothing to do with anything. It's just, the nerve cells in your hands talk to the nerve cells in your brain. And what happens when they do. It's really, really simple. And I think — or I imagine, I don't know, I'm not a neurologist — but I imagine that that's one thing that's challenging about it. Because if I'm touching you and I can enjoy it, but in my mind I can say, well, I'm giving to you, so it's okay for me to enjoy it. There's no one to give to if you're feeling up a shell. So now is that okay to enjoy it? So all that context is gone.

Karen Yates

Right? I mean, so many people, when they are in sexual interactions, are in their head. They're completely divorced from their body. And this very neatly goes straight to pleasure, pure pleasure, the pleasure of touch. And this is why you have, I'm assuming, placed it as the first exercise, because you need to access pleasure. Because, as you have said, this work is pleasure-focused. Let's move into the main work of the book, which is the Three-Minute Game, and how this Three-Minute Game, which is very simple, sets up some very interesting, extraordinary things. So, explain the Three-Minute Game.

Betty Martin

Yeah. The Three-Minute Game I learned at a workshop a couple decades back with the Body Electric School, and it was developed by a man named Harry Faddis. It's a game for two people, and each person asks the other person two different questions. And the questions are: "How do you want me to touch you for three minutes?" And the other question is, "How do you want to touch me for three minutes?" The original game was, "What do you want me to do to you? And what do you want to do to me?" But I've narrowed it down. But you could use either one. So, how do you want me to touch you for three minutes? Now you get to notice, oh, well, what sounds wonderful? I want you to scratch my head, or rub my feet, or hold me, or whatever it is. And then you ask for that. And then I get to decide, huh, is that something that I'm comfortable doing? Is that something that I'm willing to do? Maybe yes, maybe no, it may be yeah, I can do that, if I turn around this way so I can reach you. Or I can do that if I can sit down. I'm willing to try it for a minute and see how it goes. So there's some conversation about what's actually going to work. And then when you come to an agreement, then you go

ahead and do that for three minutes. So that's the one question. Then we'd switch. And you'd ask me the second question. "How do you want to touch me for three minutes?" Is where it gets really interesting, and people kind of go, "Whaaat?" Because I'm not asking you, "How do you want to give to me that you think I would like?" That's not what I'm asking. I'm asking, "How do you want to touch me?" The implication that it's for your enjoyment, because it's what you want, it's not about what I want. It's about what you want. And so you consider, see, maybe I want to explore your hair, or maybe I want to feel up your legs, or maybe I want to feel your ear, or whatever it is. And then you ask for that. And you say, "May I feel your ear? May I play with your hair?" And then again, it's time for me to pause and notice: "Is this something that I'm happy to give? Am I comfortable?" Am I comfortable giving you my ear for three minutes? Or it may be yes, you can feel my ear, but don't stick your finger inside of it. Or, yes, you can play with my hair, but don't pull it. There's a limit to what I'm willing to let you do. Of course there is. And so then, when we have this conversation and agree, then we go ahead and do the thing that we've agreed to. And of course, if it turns out to be uncomfortable for me, I can say stop. I used to think that goes without saying, but I've found that it doesn't, that people often didn't know that it was okay for them to say "Stop." Which was like, just really strange to me, because... Anyway. But of course, it's true. I've done the same. So it's not really so strange. But that's an example of one of the ways that you learn about your dynamics, by doing it. Because it's so simple that it shows where the glitches are. So that's the Three-Minute Game. And we play it both ways. So you end up with four different rounds. And this is where the Wheel of Consent was created. Because in two of those rounds, you're the doing person. And in two of them, you are the done-to person. And in two of them, it's what you want. And in two of them, it's what I want. And those overlap. So, either you're doing what you want, or you're doing what I want. Or I'm doing what you want, or I'm doing what I want. So that's four different combinations of these two questions, of who is doing and who is it for. Those two questions combine four ways. And if you have those kinds of combinations, you just draw lines across each other. Now you have quadrants. That's how that came about. But it came from this Three-Minute Game. And of course, you can make it more than three minutes. You can have a 10-minute game, a 20-minute game, a two-hour game, a three-day game. You can do it however you want.

Karen Yates

Ooh, a three-day game. Now that sounds interesting.

Betty Martin

That's very interesting, and it's not easy to be, "Okay, it's all about me," for, say, a five-hour, or an all-day game. Okay, it's all about me for this day.

Karen Yates

Do you run those workshops? I want to sign up. I love this durational game. [laughs]

Betty Martin

[laughter] Sounds pretty fun actually.

Karen Yates

Yeah, I think you'd get some takers!

Betty Martin

I think we'll work on that.

Karen Yates

So before we get into the four quadrants, I want to say that Betty has an enormous video library, where you can see this in action. So if you're like, "I can't follow this," and you're hitting rewind, there's a great video library on her site. We will link to that. There's a ton of examples in the book. What I love is you give a lot of examples from your life doing this work with people, and what happens, and what people say, and how people get emotional, and what people's "ahas" are. So there is a lot of that in the book. And I think it reminded me, yes, we all struggle with this. But one of the things I notice, I have noticed, is that pause after "How do you want to touch me for three minutes?" Or the pause after "How do you want me to touch you?" There is a pause. And that's where internal mayhem can ensue. Because it's like, "Whaaat? What are you talking about?!" [both laugh] Like, it's just one of these explosive moments of, like, flatlining. Like suddenly, any desire you might have had to touch the other person or to be touched just goes away. And you're left with a barren landscape, where you can't locate any desire whatsoever. Talk about that pause. Talk about what is happening with people.

Betty Martin

Yeah. Or you may find that suddenly, there are so many desires that you can't choose one. But yeah, that pause is really, really important. And it can be awkward. It can be excruciating. Because no one has ever asked me this before. You're asking me how I want to be touched. I haven't got a fucking clue. No one's ever asked me that before. You mean, I get to choose? I never got to choose before. So it's completely understandable that it would be an awkward moment. And it's vulnerable, to ask for what we want. It's not because there's something wrong with you. It's because it's inherently vulnerable. Because now our desire is out here in the sunlight. And we can

be laughed at, we could be criticized, we could be disappointed. All kinds of things can happen.

Karen Yates

You talked about when we take. Purely in take, when we're really acting on our pure want. It can feel shameful, because we're seen with our wanting. And that really struck me. That struck me quite forcibly.

Betty Martin

Yeah, that quadrant of "I'm doing to you what I want to do to you for my own enjoyment." Holy shit. You're like, how much shame accompanies that? For most people, quite a bit. And I'm not suggesting that you start doing this all the time in your life. Like, just take whatever you want and to hell with everybody else. I'm not suggesting that. It's a practice, which we'll come back to in a minute. But when I have your permission — "May I explore your hair? May I feel your calves?" And you say yes, now you are giving me a gift. The gift is you. The gift really is access to you. And that's an honest-to-goodness gift. And so, for me to receive that gift, I have to stop trying to make it about you. I have to recognize that, oh, this is for me. This gift is for me, for my pleasure, and my enjoyment, and my curiosity. And I'm going to take it in, and take it into my heart. And that can be very vulnerable, as you said, and shame can come up, and all kinds of stuff. And it tends to be — this quadrant, the Taking quadrant, where I'm doing what I want — tends to be, for most people, the hardest. Most people can get it, fiddled around a little bit, play with it a little bit, it'll click. For some people, it's extremely difficult, and it takes coming back to it many times.

Karen Yates

Correct me if I'm wrong, but that is why you begin with the hand exercise. Because if you cannot access the straight route to your pleasure through taking — because you're taking the pen, or you're taking pleasure from the stone, or whatever — if you can't do that, then you're probably going to have trouble accessing the Taking quadrant with another human being.

Betty Martin

Absolutely. Yeah. And that's where this little exercise actually came from. I was working with clients. I had one person who, he was touching my arm, feeling my arm. And I was trying to verbally coach him into, okay, feel for the shape, feel for the texture. I was assuming, naively, that everybody had this sensation in their hands — they just need to be reminded of it. So I was trying to remind — okay, feel for the shape, feel for the texture, feel for the little hairs on the arm. And he just could not get it. He was stuck in

trying to please me. And I looked over on the counter next to me, and there was this big river stone that had these interesting textures in it. And I looked at it and I thought to myself, "Aha." Let's see if you can feel this. Let's see what happens when there's nobody to give to. And so I handed him this stone, and I said, "Here, feel this." And he couldn't feel that either. I mean, he knew it was a stone. So, some data was getting in. But he couldn't attend to any of this sensation of it, he couldn't feel it. And that was sort of an "aha" moment for me, of like, "Oh, it's not that he can't feel a person. It's that he can't feel anything at all with his hands." And then I began doing with other people, and I realized that in order to enjoy the feel of you, under my hands, feeling your arm or something, in order for me to enjoy feeling your arm, I have to have a preliminary step of being able to enjoy feeling anything at all.

Karen Yates

Yeah, I'm also thinking — because there is this aspect, for me at least, and you did talk about spiritual sexual practices and Tantra a bit in the book — but for me, it's like being able to have a deep, sensory relationship with the world around you. It is that oneness piece. It's that everything can give pleasure, really, if you're open to it. Or if you're clicking into that channel. Our bodies are designed to give pleasure, and we can feel pleasure. There's one other thing that I thought was so fascinating, that you wrote about the Taking quadrant — and we'll get to the other quadrants in a second. You said they, the people who had trouble with the Taking quadrant, "They were afraid and ashamed to put themselves first. Over the years, I came to see another angle, the determination to stay out of either Receiving quadrant, of Taking or Accepting, and keeping your partner there, means putting them in the more vulnerable place so you can avoid it. Taking, this is a kind of selfishness much more subtle, and cowardly." And I was like "Oooh, I understand." I understand for myself, I understand being in relationships with people like that. It's like, oh, yeah. And why I love this work, Betty, is — again, so simple — but then, when you break it down, the issues start floating to the surface really quickly.

Betty Martin

Yeah, that's been my observation as well. You know, I'm not a psychologist, I'm not a therapist. I was a sex coach, hands-on sex coach and sex worker. And I just noticed that when I asked people these two questions, they got all confused. And so, I just kept asking. And that's where it all grew out of, just noticing, "Oh, this is where people get lost." And if you're honest with yourself, when you notice other people getting lost, you have to realize, "Oh, this is where I get lost, too." This is where I get confused. This is where I, you know, get stuck. So you notice it in them, you notice it in yourself. And

again, I think it's because it's so simple. "How do you want me to touch you?" is a very simple question. It may be an awkward question. But it's really simple.

Karen Yates

We will return to my interview with Dr. Betty Martin in a moment. Did you know we have PDF transcripts of all episodes, including this one, on our website? Each episode page contains the link to the transcript, which you can then download. Check it out.

Wild & Sublime is also sponsored in part by our Sublime Supporter, Chicago-based Full Color Life Therapy, therapy for all of you, at [fullcolorlifetherapy.com](http://fullcolorlifetherapy.com). If you would like to be a Sublime Supporter, showcasing you and your business and supporting us at the same time, contact us at [info@wildandsublime.com](mailto:info@wildandsublime.com). We now continue with my interview with Dr. Betty Martin. We discuss the three other areas of the Wheel dynamic: Serving, Allowing, and Receiving; why people resist clarity; as well as Martin's life in sex work. Enjoy.

[to Betty Martin] We've been talking about the Taking quadrant, which is "May I touch you in this manner?" You said, near the end of the book, "This teaches us to take responsibility for what we want to do, and that leads to integrity." I would love for you to walk us through the other quadrants, and how they're queued up by the questions, and what they're all about

Betty Martin

I actually want to back up a little bit, and say that the Wheel of Consent and the Three-Minute Game are a practice. And it doesn't mean that you have to live your life this way. It doesn't mean that every interaction has to fit into a quadrant. It doesn't replace your life. But if you take it as a practice, you create a container, and you enter into the container — let's play the game, honey — then you play the game. And during that practice, you're very strict with exactly being clear which quadrant you're in, being very clear that you ask, and you say yes and no. And then you close the container. And then you go back to your regular life. And then you do whatever you want. You learn something from being in the container. And whatever you learn is up to you. And then you take that back into your life and you apply it however you want to apply it. But it can help to remember that it is a practice. And it's something that you come back to, you explore it because it's interesting. And you'll have your "ahas," and you'll have your tender feelings. And then you integrate those however you want to, and then you take that into your life however you want to. So I just want to be clear about that.

Karen Yates

Yeah, I'm glad you said that. Because you know, you can do this with a friend.

Betty Martin

Oh, yeah, yeah.

Karen Yates

This doesn't have to be a sexual endeavor by any means.

Betty Martin

Yeah. In fact, it's much easier to learn without being sexy with it.

Karen Yates

Mm hmm.

Betty Martin

As soon as you get sexual, especially if you include the genitals, the stakes go up. And then you revert back to doing the same old thing, and you try to get the job done. And it's very difficult to learn when you're turned on. Much easier to learn if you're not including sexual touching. I mean, you can get turned on, sure. But in the book, I say don't include the genitals — just take them off the menu. So you want to hear the other quadrants?

Karen Yates

Yes.

Betty Martin

So there's two, you're either doing for the other person, or you're doing for yourself. When you're doing for yourself, we call that taking. Taking is a problematic word for people, because for some people, it implies stealing. But this is not stealing. It's receiving a gift of a particular kind. So that's the taking quadrant. That's what I've been talking about. The other doing quadrant is Serving. Now I'm doing what you want, and I'm doing it the way you wanted. Still respecting my limits, of course. And serving is the one that feels natural to most people. Most people think they're serving most of the time. But there are still some things to learn about being clear, about finding out what the person wants, and getting over your own idea of how they're supposed to respond, or what they're supposed to like, or how they're supposed to moan, or smile, or... Yeah, so there's definitely some things to learn.

Karen Yates

So is this where the control freaks are?

Betty Martin

Yeah, yeah. [both laugh]

Karen Yates

The control freaks are in the Serving quadrant? They don't live — they need special tutelage in serving.

Betty Martin

Exactly, right. And it's perfectly natural, because of course, we want to have an effect on people. That's pretty natural. And we want to contribute to other people's joy. And sometimes, we want to stay — this what you were reading a moment ago — sometimes we want to stay out of that vulnerable place ourselves. And so, if we keep serving, then the other person will have to be in that vulnerable place, and we don't have to. So that's one way that we can kinda—

Karen Yates

Do-si-do out! Yeah.

Betty Martin

Yeah, yeah. Or we can, you know, we can feed our ego, or we can use our cool tricks that we think are so hot.

Karen Yates

Right? How to give your partner 20 orgasms in a night, right?

Betty Martin

Yeah... Oh my god. Don't get me started on that one. [laughs] So those are the two doing quadrants, the Serving and Taking. And the two done-to quadrants, there's Accepting, which is you're doing what I want. This is where I've asked you, will you scratch my back this way? Will you read my head this way? Will you rub my feet this way? Will you bring me a cup of tea? Will you pick me up at the airport? It's "will you." And so I'm asking you to take action for my benefit. And accepting, also interesting, is a word that has some problems, but I couldn't find any other word for this one. Accepting sometimes means just putting up with whatever happens: "Oh, I accept my lot in life," or "I accepted this unwanted touch." But that's not what we're talking about. We're talking about, someone gives you a present and you say, "Oh, I accept! Thank

you very much. That's exactly what I wanted." It's receiving a gift. And the gift you are receiving is the action of the other person. In taking the gift, you are receiving this access to the other person. In accepting, the gift you are receiving is the other person's action that they're doing for your benefit. So that's one of the done-to quadrants. The other done-to quadrant is Allowing. So, your partner has asked you, "May I play with your hair?" And you say "Yes, but don't pull." Then you are in Allowing. What you want doesn't matter; what you prefer doesn't matter. But your boundaries matter, absolutely. Your limits matter. Yes, but don't pull, or yes, but no scratching, or, you can feel up to here. Your limits matter. But it's not about what you want. And you are giving the gift of access to you. You are giving yourself, essentially. So each of them, each quadrant has its own particular challenges and ahas, and liberation. And each one has its own particular kind of erotic flavor if you like it. Each one has something to teach you about yourself that's different.

Karen Yates

Yeah. As I listen to the words wash over me again — Giving, Taking, Allowing, Accepting — they're such charged words, right? And if you don't really know how to maintain your boundaries, it's like, ughh! Give, give, give everything! take, take, I'm gonna be taken, aghhh! And it's like, no, this is, you know — I can't stress enough, and you have been stressing it too — this is a conversation between two people. It's not that one person has all the power to do something.

Betty Martin

Right. Yeah.

Karen Yates

And then you get to watch yourself in conversation, right?

Betty Martin

Yeah. The Allow quadrant — I think I gave this example in the book. I had a guy, it was a client, who was in his 60s, straight guy. He had had almost no relationships with women. And he was just terrified of women. And that's why he was coming to see me, so he could get some help. And we played the game over several sessions, and then it became his turn to be in the Allow quadrant. And he had just asked me, "May I feel your hair?" Or whatever it was, and that was fine. And then it was his turn to ask me, "How do you want to touch me?" And he got nervous and tense, and was like, leaning forward, leaning back, oh, well, can I say this? He was like, getting ready to jump into a river, you know? And then he said, "Okay, I can do this. I can do this. And he blurts out, "Do whatever you want!" And I said, "Whoa. Is that what you thought the question

was?" He said, "Isn't that the question?" I said, "No. The question is, what do I want to do?" And then I'll tell you, and then you get to decide if that's okay with you. And he just looked at me blankly, and he said, "I do?" And I realized, holy shit. It never occurred to him that he had a choice about how he was touched. Never occurred to him. He couldn't even hear the question. "How do you want to touch me?" transposed in his mind to "Do anything, do whatever you want." And it was a terrifying statement, because who knows what will happen? So that was a big aha for me, like, oh, if you don't know that you have a choice about how you are touched, you can't afford to be in the same room as anybody. It showed me that the first thing, the one thing that enables you to enjoy being touched at all is knowing that you have a choice about it.

Karen Yates

Later, you said, "When your partner asks you how you would like to be touched, and you answer with how you don't mind being touched, this comes from a lifetime of receiving touch we didn't want, and settling for the crumbs of what we did want." That phrase, "settling for the crumbs" comes up a lot in the book, and I think it's so powerful. Because we move ourselves in these weird positions. And we talk about adapting ourselves to the situation, rather than being the activator in a situation, and how these things come up over and over again when you do this work. You get to watch yourself—

Betty Martin

Try to make it work.

Karen Yates

Try to make it work.

Betty Martin

Yeah, yeah. I imagine that we all have been touched against our will, in ways that we didn't like and we didn't want, and we couldn't stop it. And it happened before we could talk.

Karen Yates

Can you talk about your grandson, and the little girl in the stroller? That story blew my mind.

Betty Martin

So when my grandson was three, we were standing in line at the zoo to get in. And there was a little girl in front of us in a stroller, about the same size as he was. And he's

a friendly little guy. He starts to walk up and try to climb into a stroller with her. And she puts out her hand, like in a stop sign. She says "No." Which was a really smart thing to do. And her mother says, "Oh honey, it's not nice to say no." And I thought, "Eeee!" And I moved him back, picked him up or something, and said, "She doesn't want you in her stroller, honey. No means no." And I didn't have the presence of mind to say to the mother, but I wanted to say, "Honey, in another 10 years, you're gonna really hope that she knows how to say no." And then I just moved him a little farther away. And I thought, oh boy, you know, what a perfect example of what so many of us learn, that it's not nice to say no. With lots of different cultural meanings, and family meanings and stuff attached to it. And to some degree, many of us didn't say no, because it kept us safe. I mean, if we just said no, we'd have gotten clobbered. So we learned how to go along and make do and pick up the crumbs. And we learn that touch is this thing that happens to us, that we just have to figure out how to deal with, because we don't really have a choice about it. We get picked up, we get our teeth brushed, we get our nappies changed, we get all kinds of stuff. It's just part of being a child. In the best of circumstances, it's done with kindness and respect. And in the worst of circumstances, it's truly horrific. And most of us are somewhere in between. But we learn before we can talk that touch is a thing that happens, you just have to deal with it. And so then, as we get older and interact with other people, and we may have a chance to learn that we have some choice, but we may not. And so now, someone wants to put their hand up our shirt, and we don't know how to say no. And we have to try to like it, because we think we're supposed to like it. Or maybe we do like it, and then it becomes very confusing. So when somebody says, "How do you want me to touch you?" We hear that in our minds as, "How is it okay to touch you?" Because we have never learned that there is such a thing as being touched exactly the way you want. And that has been amazing to learn, both for myself and with other clients — that, wait a minute, I get to choose what I want? And how does that work exactly? And is there such a thing? Like, does it even exist in the known universe, that I can choose how I want to be touched? So that's a big "aha" for many people. And like you just noted there, often it's so far out of our reality that we can't even hear the question.

Karen Yates

Yeah. So, these four quadrants basically make up two sections, of receiving and giving. Here you've presented some very strong exercises for people to really parse out giving and receiving. But people have resistance against teasing out receiving and giving. What's going on there? Why do you think people are like, "No, thank you! I'd rather stay in confusion."

Betty Martin

Yes, that's not uncommon at all. The word "receiving" has a couple of different meanings. Well, there are many meanings, but two of them are, that something is coming towards us, or is done to us, or arrives at us. I can receive a package in the mail, I can receive a caress, I can receive a punch in the jaw. And all of that is described as receiving — it's happening to us, it's arriving. But I'm using just one subset of that, which is receiving a gift, which means it's something that I want, and I'm glad to have. Or it may be the gift of you letting me do what I want to you. That's also a gift. So now we have one use of the word receive that means it's happening to me whether I like it or not, and another use of the word receive, which is, it's something that I want. And that's why I defined it in the book, because I'm using that second definition. So your question of why it's hard, or why people resist taking it apart — I think one reason people resist taking it apart is because they're confused about what it means. So, if receiving means being done to, if you're using that definition of receipt, which means being done to, and your experiences of being done to have been less than interesting, or less than pleasant, then why would you want more of that? You don't. So you think, well, I don't want to receive, because that just means stuff's gonna happen to me that I don't like, and then I don't want to do that. So I think that's one reason why people resist it. Another reason people resist it is because it doesn't sound spiritual, or intimate, or — it just sounds like, "Well, we love each other, so therefore receiving and giving all get mixed together."

Karen Yates

"When I receive I give, or when I give I'm receiving." So fabulous, ughh...

Betty Martin

Yeah, yeah. But I think what's under it, really, is that receiving a gift is inherently vulnerable. Again, it's not because there's something wrong with you. It's inherent. Because when we receive a gift, there's a certain way that we have to open our hearts and take it in. And when you open your heart, you are vulnerable to disappointment. You might feel shamed for wanting this thing, you might feel guilty for the other person doing what you want, you might feel all kinds of things. And plus, now what you want is visible. Holy shit. You know, now people can laugh at you. And receiving a gift engenders gratitude. If you feel enough gratitude, you will cry. So if you don't want to cry, just don't feel gratitude. And the way to avoid that is just don't receive anything. And the way to avoid that is just keep give, give, give, give, giving.

Karen Yates

Right.

Betty Martin

Time-honored solution.

Karen Yates

Time-honored tradition. So, one thing I want to ask you, Betty, as we conclude — you have a lovely, you wrote a bit at the end about sex work. And I know, it's like I'm pulling this in, but I think it's so fucking important. But I want you to talk a little bit about the importance of sex work!

Betty Martin

Oh, hell yes. I came too late in life, in my late 40s, early 50s. And it came — from my own erotic exploring was through these workshops and things, and was undertaken for my own benefit. I didn't have any idea of offering it to others. I'm just like, okay, I need this. And after a number of years of my own development in that realm, I thought, oh, I want to offer this to other people. I want to give people an opportunity to have some experiences that I've had. And so I closed my chiropractic office. I moved to the city, I opened a new studio, and I didn't know what I was doing. But that's okay. Because I knew how to be with people. I knew how to touch people. I knew, you know, how to be comfortable with people. And so I started coaching. It was clinical, because that was my background, I knew I do that. And at some point — and it was a very clear line for me between, okay now, I'm not going to fuck anybody, because that's the line. And I was fine with that. And then later I realized, well, you know, what? If it was the right money, and it was the right person, I'd fuck my little brains out. So who am I kidding here? That's not the question. The question is, who is the right person, and what's the right money? So that became a different question. And so I realized, well, I'm not interested in offering full service to people walking on the street. I just couldn't do it. But I'm interested in helping people learn. And if they get to a point where they have learned enough, and I'm comfortable with them, and it seems useful for them, then I could offer fucking. But really, it's not that many people for whom it's really necessary. And it's not that many people that I'm comfortable with. But I came out of it with a very clear understanding that offering sexual experiences to people is a tremendous gift. And it is so useful. And, you know, I call myself a whore with the greatest affection and respect. Because whores are doing God's work. That's really clear to me. And I realize that I can say that from a certain place of privilege, because I don't have to work with people that I don't want to work with. And that's not true of everyone. If you're desperate for money, you're going to work with people that you otherwise wouldn't. And that's also true of being a barista, or an accountant. That's not unique to sex work, although it's particularly poignant, and sometimes dangerous, in sex work. So I realize

that I'm coming from a certain privilege there, not having to work with someone I don't want to work with. But it's very clear to me that taking people, guiding people through an erotic experience, is a profound kind of work. And it's a calling. And it's so useful to people. And so, I'm proud to call myself a whore, and I'm really proud to be part of whore circles. [laughs] Yeah.

Karen Yates

Absolutely. Absolutely. Betty, did you have anything else you wanted to say today?

Betty Martin

Hmm. I don't think so. It's been fun talking with you.

Karen Yates

Betty, I really appreciate it.

Betty Martin

Yeah.

Karen Yates

Thank you so much.

Betty Martin

Great to see you again.

Karen Yates

To learn more about Betty Martin, download a chapter of "The Art of Receiving and Giving," as well as links to videos showing the Three-Minute Game in action and a diagram of the Wheel of Consent, go to the show notes. "The Art of Receiving and Giving" is on our Bookshop site, a Wild & Sublime affiliate program. Buy the book on Bookshop and help independent booksellers and Wild & Sublime. That link is also in the show notes. [music]

The work I do in biofield tuning, an energy modality that uses sound waves to help repattern your bioelectric field, can support you in getting out of stuck behaviors, overcoming trauma, and becoming more aware of different choices. If you are interested in working with me or learning more about my weekly group biofield tuning sessions on Zoom on a variety of topics, including balancing your energy centers, increasing intuition and more, go to [karen-yates.com](http://karen-yates.com). That link is in the show notes.

Well, that's it, folks. Have a delightfully sensational week. [Wild & Sublime theme music] Next week, summer reading continues with my live show interview with Sophie Lucido Johnson about her polyamory memoir, "Many Love."

Thank you for listening. If you know someone who might be interested in this episode, send it to them. Do you like what you heard? Then give us a nice review on your podcast app. You can follow us on social media @wildandsublime and sign up for newsletters at wildandsublime.com. I'd like to thank associate producer Julia Williams and design guru Jean-Francois Gervais. Theme Music by David Ben-Porat. This episode was edited by The Creative Imposter studios. Our media sponsor is Rebellious Magazine, feminist media, at rebelliousmagazine.com.