

Jealousy

There are few people who don't at least sometimes feel the bite of the green monster. Jealousy can be a sign that one is either not getting one's needs met or is afraid of not getting one's needs met. This should be discussed with the other person or people in the relationship. Jealousy can also be a sign of possessiveness, in which case one should examine one's attitudes about a relationship as ownership of a person. Jealousy is neither, as some people feel, proof of love nor proof of emotional immaturity. In any case, jealousy is best dealt with by recognizing it and discussing it when it happens.

Agreements

Absent the (typically assumed) monogamy agreement, people in a poly relationship generally make a specific agreement about sexual and romantic behavior outside the relationship. Working out an agreement is important in general, and especially important for people who are considering changing their monogamous relationship into some form of poly relationship.

Examples of agreements include, but are not limited to:

- I will play safe, and I will come home. One of the simplest agreements and one of the strongest. It directly addresses two major worries - abandonment and sexually transmitted diseases (AIDS is only one, and "play safe" means that any sex is safer sex).
- Tell me about it. Members must tell each other about any outside involvement. Sometimes this notification must be before, sometimes it's "before if possible, and after in any case".
- Don't tell me about it. Involvement outside the relationship is accepted, but the partner(s) doesn't (don't) want to hear about it.

- The Veto. Members must get prior and on-going approval of involvement outside a relationship.
- Only together. Sexual and/or romantic involvement outside the relationship is acceptable if all people in the relationship are involved.
- Sex only. Being sexual outside the relationship is ok, getting emotionally involved isn't.
- Fidelity. A fidelitous (closed) relationship is still poly if there are more than two people in the relationship. Each of these can be an agreement on its own, or they can be combined in various ways. Note that agreements do not have to be symmetrical - for example, one person in a relationship could decide not to get sexually involved outside the relationship, but that it's fine if another member does. The major point here is that for polyamory to work, it should be considered, discussed, and mutually agreed upon by everybody involved.

Resources

Loving More

publishes Loving More Magazine
Website: <http://lovemore.com>

Polyamory.org

website for the newsgroup alt.polyamory.
Extensive list of resources, local and national.
Website: <http://www.polyamory.org/>

Polychromatic.com

info, book reviews and more!
Website: <http://www.polychromatic.com>

The Ethical Slut

Book by Dossie Easton and Catherine A. Liszt.
Often referred to as "the Poly Bible"

Loving More: The Polyfidelity Primer

Book by Ryam Nearing

Bi-Friendly Santa Cruz and Women's Bi-Net (Santa Cruz/Monterey)
(831) 427-4556



A Brief Introduction to Polyamory.

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About Relationships

In this society, it is usually assumed that one is either single or in some form of monogamous relationship. At best, it is sometimes considered acceptable (barely) to "play the field" if one is not in a committed relationship. If one is in a committed relationship, it is with one person only, and any sexual and/or romantic involvement outside the relationship is "cheating". Both of these situations - "playing the field" and "cheating" - are still often subject to the classic double standard of being more acceptable (or at least less unacceptable) for men than women.

Monogamous relationships can be wonderful. Many people have honest, stable, egalitarian, and very fulfilling monogamous relationships. But there are people - straights, lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals - who have chosen other types of relationships. These relationships come in many forms but have one thing in common. The people in these relationships have agreed to be non-monogamous - to step outside the standard two-person, sexually fidelitous and romantically fidelitous relationship.

Basic Vocabulary

(Note: As with most of the rest of the English language, precise definitions of these words vary from person to person and from group to group. Your mileage may vary.)

Closed: A relationship is closed if there is an agreement among the members to not get sexually and/or romantically involved with anyone outside the relationship. A monogamous relationship is a closed two-person relationship.

Group Marriage: A marriage involving more than two people. Not legally recognized in the U.S. or by most major religions in western society. Many people do it anyway, often making legal agreements that function similarly to the legalities in a usual marriage.

Open: A relationship is open if there is an

agreement among the members that it is acceptable to get sexually and/or romantically involved outside of the relationship. Specific rules within a relationship about such involvement are usually negotiated to best fit the people in the relationship. (See "Agreements")

Partner: Short for "life partner." Gender-neutral, orientation-neutral term for someone with whom one is involved, usually in a primary relationship. Also sometimes used in different contexts as short for "sexual partner".

Poly: Short for polyamorous, usually used as an adjective. A poly relationship is a non-monogamous relationship. A poly person is someone in, or at least interested in, a poly relationship. See polyamory.

Polyamory: Literally, "many loves." A generic term for non-monogamy.

Polyandry: Having more than one husband.

Polyfidelity: Closed relationship involving more than two people. The members of a group marriage, for example, may limit their sexual/romantic involvement to members of the group.

Polygamy: Having more than one spouse.

Polygyny: Having more than one wife.

Primary Relationship(s): The relationship(s) which is/are the most important and typically involve a high degree of commitment, such as the relationship with a marriage partner.

Safe Sex: Also known as safer sex. Ways of being sexual while trying to minimize the odds of contracting STDs (sexually transmitted diseases), particularly AIDS. This is done by minimizing the exchange of bodily fluids (especially semen, vaginal secretions, and blood), usually by using latex barriers such as condoms and dental dams for intercourse and oral sex, and/or by limiting sexual practices to less risky ones (e.g. mutual masturbation).

Secondary Relationship(s): Close, ongoing emotional and/or sexual relationship(s), but with a lesser degree of commitment than a primary relationship.

Sex Negative: A word often used to describe people who think of sexuality in general, or any sexuality different from their own, as dirty or sinful.

Sex Positive: A word often used to describe people who are comfortable with their own sexuality and sexuality in general.

Swinging: A subculture of people who enjoy being sexual with acquaintances and/or friends. (This word seems to be a point of some contention. Some people associate "swinging" with sexist, indiscriminate, dishonest, and/or risky sexual behavior. Probably, behavior like this does or doesn't happen, unrelated to what the participants call themselves.)

Tertiary Relationship(s): Emotional and/or sexual relationship(s) with little or no ongoing involvement.

Triad: A relationship involving three people.

Honesty and Communication

Honesty is as important in a poly relationship as it is in a monogamous one, perhaps more so. The most basic form this takes is honesty about one's relationship(s).

Because of the assumption in this society that relationships are monogamous, if someone is non-monogamous but does not tell his/her partners, that's dishonesty, not responsible non-monogamy or polyamory.

Additionally, it is very important to keep lines of communication open in poly relationships. Sexuality is a very emotionally-charged issue in this society, and even those of us who feel comfortable challenging societal assumptions need to talk things out. Indeed, talking things out is more necessary if one doesn't make assumptions, as people who decide not to follow the assumed path often need to make their own path, which takes careful consideration.