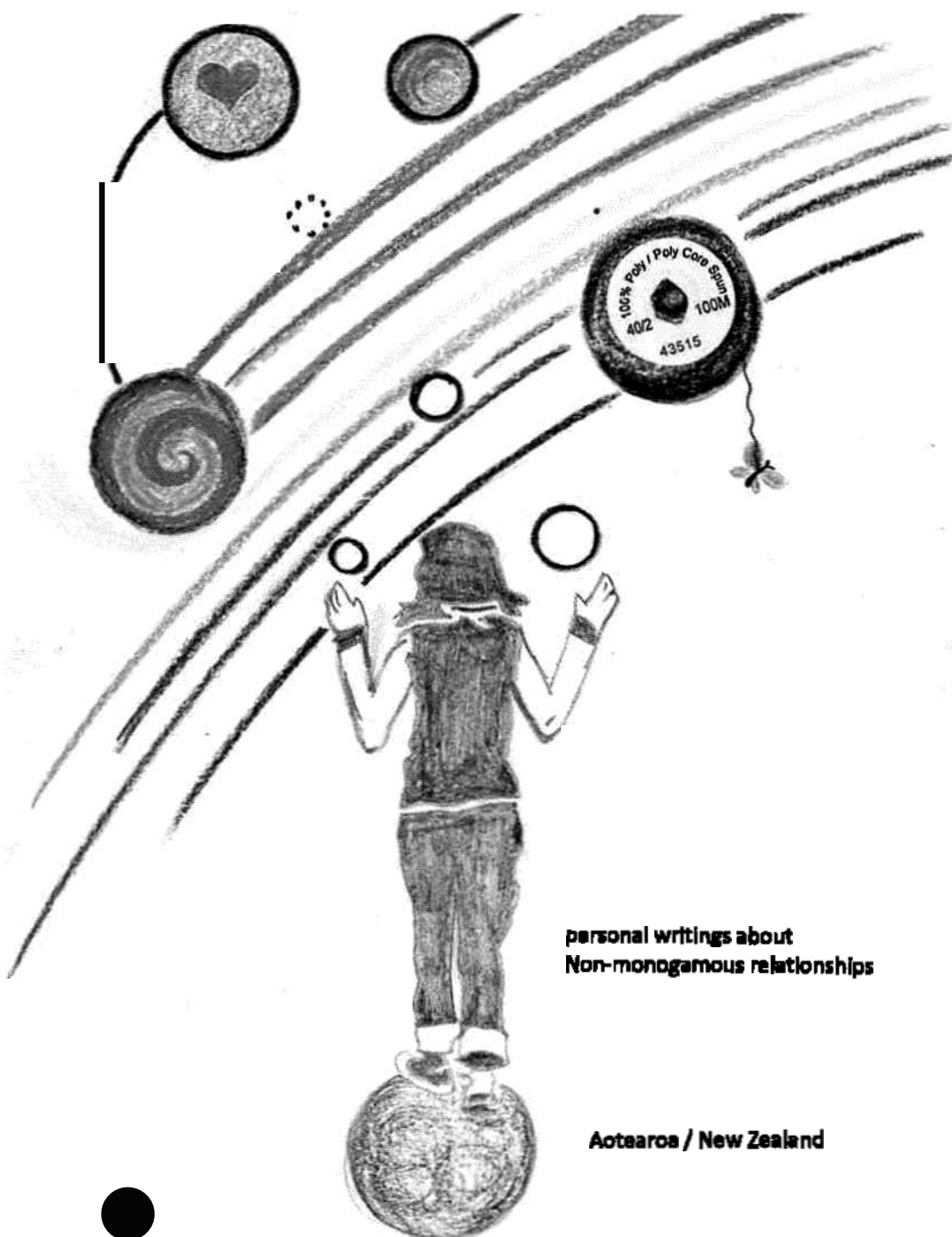


JUGGLING THE RAINBOW



personal writings about
Non-monogamous relationships

Aotearoa / New Zealand

BOOKS & ZINES WHICH MIGHT BE FUN AND HELPFUL TO READ:

- ♦ Dossie Easton, Catherine A. Liszt: Ethical Slut - A Guide to Infinite Sexual Possibilities
- Wendy O Matik : Redefining Our Relationships: Guidelines for R p c .. Open P I tionships
- Marcia Munson: The Lesbian Polyamory Reader: Open Rel tionships, Non Mon • i • and Casual . . .
- Zine by Andie & Shannon: Non / Monogamy: Doin it and Doin it well?
(Download from www.qzap.org)
- ♦ UK Zine: Friends of Poly (apparently available via www.cherrybombcomics.co.nz)

SPECIAL DEDICATION:

To Kirsty – having the same idea as me. And I'm still waiting for your story ☺

To Sarah - for encouraging and F ! ting me. And for the deep touch far beyond open arms and . . rs or wine-sparkling discussions on a bathroom floor!

PS: Ap for spelling mistakes or sentences that make no sense.
This second , ,

February 2010 – Aotearoa New Zea . . nd

Contact Talka: juggling_the_rainbo_@yahoo.co.nz



LING # 1:

Tena koutou polyamorous friends!

An old idea of mine wanted to be put into practise – and was eventually carried out with help and participation of quite a few people. I wanted to make a zine to share our experiences, ideas and aims around open_polyamorous_radical relationships & multipl. love.

At the A-fem hui in Auckland in April 2009 we had a spontaneous discussion around this topic mainly focussed on how to define (open) relationships. So there was actually a whole bunch of womxn sitting around the table and I thought: Wow, so we are actually many and we should share what we do!

I didn't want to make another theoretically based how-to-do-it book (there are quite a few good ones out there, see left) but a compilation of personal experiences. Why we chose open relationships, how we came across polyamory, what we learned from mlln compltation. which personal guidelines we have and what - above all, practised love it all its colors means to us...

However, this is a relatively homogenous zine. I have quite a few conversations about open relationships (outside my own involvement) and there are certainly people for whom this model does not work out – because of various reasons. I don't claim to be a „professional“ in polyamory though I used to skip out of conversations with the announced excuse „I am really the wrong person to talk to about your monogamous relationship problems“. Today I just really love to see us trying and I'd love to see more (diverse) zines pop up ☺

Writing about our own stories helps to understand ourselves better but also makes readers think, question or even change. I don't wanna do without all the personal zines I have read in my life and the impact they had on my definition and understanding of myself, others and the world around. And so have all those contributions to this zine changed my perspectives and perceptions about relationships, their meaning and conditions... Personally I feel like I'm entering a new stage of what it means to have more than one lover. I confront myself with questions. Why they have to be lovers or what makes them lovers - ... me? How do I honestly deal with jealousy apart from putting my heart on ice in an attempt to get away from pain? How can I be less pretentious and more honest even though it complicates relationships?

I'm hoping we learn and grow together and while modeling our own kinds of relationships we might get other people interested on the way...

I want to thank all of you who have put effort into writing and have sometimes even been in emotionally turmoil during this process. These are inspiring and intimate stories, please treat them as the personal jewels they are.

Have fun reading, remembering, wondering, reassessing and creating...

HANNAH HE WAI LING

I find Polyamory a rather odd term. It makes me think of a newly discovered Octopus, or a many sided mathematical shape, or a medical disease.

"Today marine biologists discovered a rare Giant Polyamory".

"Ok kids, turn to page 78, and make a polyamory, remember to use your rulers and protractors".

"We've found a cluster of polyamorous cells, we'll need to move quickly to remove them".

In a way my two million trajectory experiences of open relationships and unconventional relationships, are somewhat like those Polyamory connotations that spring to my mind.

The way I got into one of my non-sexual relationships with a straight couple that I'm no longer in, was thinking about straight women. I was thinking about how patriarchies, gender roles, gender socialisations, and possibly even biology, sets about imbalances and differences within a heterosexual couple. All those stereotypes, too often result, that if there are children in a heterosexual couple relationship and they break up, it is the woman who has the children. Of course this is for many differing sometimes complex, sometimes simple reasons. Nonetheless, in my experience, whatever the reasons, solo parents appear to be women.

I've never really had any desire to have children, I physically have them. My straight best woman friend at the time has always wanted kids. How our particular unconventional relationship began, was her saying she didn't want to be a single mum. Then me saying "No probs, whatever guy you hook up with, I will co-parent so even if you both break up, or if he leaves, you won't be a solo mum". The long and short of it, was that after about 4 years, it didn't work out. Now it didn't not work out because these kinds of arrangements are impossible. Rather, it didn't work out for the reasons many conventional relationships also don't work out. Simply because there are a myriad of reasons they don't work out.

What Ippelled about wanting to have a family with my best friend in a straight coupling, was that while I've wanted to have a family with children, the thought of me and another person who was my Partner, being the two main people to raise kids, has always made me feel extremely claustrophobic and trapped. This set up offered alternatives.

It didn't work out for many boring almost cliché reasons. Long distance, we grew apart, things changed, feelings changed, how we wanted to live our lives changed. On top of that, I feel that because this relationship was unconventional and we spent a good deal of time justifying and explaining it to people who were

a bit down on it; we spent much time nurturing the idea, the ideal, and the future existence of it, rather than working and actually having a relationship, enjoying and living in the relationship. So it grew, and we forgot to grow along with it and each other.

My feelings about families haven't changed though. The thought of a nuclear family where I'm part of the nucleus would still make me feel ill if I considered it. At the moment I've been pondering about the roles of Aunties, Uncles and Grandparents ¹¹⁵ important for raising children, as well as for the well-being of the biological parents.

My other experiences of open relationships with various people in the past five years, has been of the lixuuil/Piltner nature. Before I discovered that open relationships could exist outside of piltrillrchill-mlln-has-many-wives, I would be in a loving monogamous (though I didn't know to call it that) relationship, and after a year or two, I would be really wanting to sleep with a person or people. And the whole time I would be still wanting to be with my piltner, and really desiring someone else, and feeling like total crap because I thought it was because I didn't love my partner enough and couldn't stay "honourable" or "loyal" or "loyal" to them. It really messed with me, and I would eventually sabotage the relationship I was in, so that I could go and fulfil or experience that desire.

The main thing that stuck with me after reading "Redefining Relationships", was "*Phewf, I'm not just a Dog/Player/stereotypical masculine identified person, or commitment phobe, my feeling and desires are actually valid*".

It affirmed that my desire was not solely relegated to the "Some people just can't be content, and they have a problem with commitment". I was no longer simply a flawed human because I desired outside of a monogamous relationship. There wasn't something inherently wrong with me because I had been desiring people other than my partner.

So the main reason I live and choose to be in open relationships is because I can't be in closed ones. I've tried many times and they don't work for me. Saying that, though, this open three and a half year relationship I'm in at the moment has not been a walk in the park. It's been a lot of hard work. It has required infinite amounts of reflection (no matter how undesirable), honest acknowledgments of personal limitations, and a commitment to screw up and be willing to deal with the consequences and make amends. There have been many times I've wished I was programmed for monogamy.

Along with the expected crap I knew I would be dealing with, such as "*socialised jealousy equals love, you just have sexual issues you haven't dealt with, it can't work, you can't be that serious about your partner or that into them*

if you're sleeping round blah blah", was something else unexpected that cropped up and was very difficult to sort through.

One of the biggies for me in this current open relationship was race. I expected all the other stuff, but I thought I had finished (so naive...) dealing with my racial inferiority and internal racism years ago. Oh the joys of living in a white centric colonial settler society means the work is never done...

We're Chinese!!!, Cantonese from Southern China, whose migration tales wind through Malaysia also. Growing up in Aotearoa in the 80's and 90's there wasn't (and still isn't) a whole lot of media that shows Chinese people as attractive and -normal". Bar the token movie stars and kung fu stars, beauty is largely constructed is of European descent, slim for women, muscly or toned for men, and under conforming to feminine females, masculine males). Small slanted eyes, round noses with small bridges, and singular eyelids aren't really seen... markers of beauty, desirability and attraction. Combine that with not gender conforming and being a butch person in a female body, and all the negative connotations of butch women in our transphobic society, and you can start to see where and how my internal racism, inferiority complex has been grown and nurtured.

Saying that, I'm very happy with myself, by body, my gender expression, and my race and ethnic heritage, so it was all the more confusing when upon examination and reflection, I will be having a hard time dealing with my pakeha partner's new pakeha lover, because it's the root of that H.V.I.N. + Hard Time, was me feeling ugly and unattractive about being Chinese.

There is a Happily Ever After ending in my tale, or at least I happily ever after at the moment. My partner's new lover is not so new now, they've been seeing each other for over a year. Me and the lover have the occasional beer, it's add but nice. And I've battled with white-centric pesky creations of internal racism and racial inferiority for now. And my open relationship is plodding along nicely and contentedly after some rough beginnings.

I guess a lesson I've learnt with this stuff, jealousy, open relationships, dealing with the crap of living in a white-privileging, transgender bled, transphobic, monogamy worshipping society, is one of On-goingness.

Early on when this lover was new, I kept waiting for a point where I just wouldn't feel jealous or insecure anymore, where I would finally "Be Doing An Open Relationship".

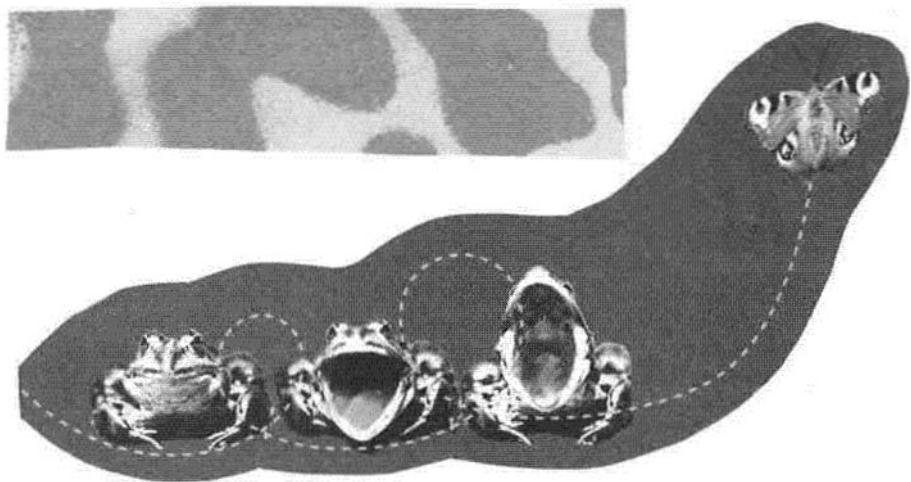
I'd do all my reflecting, my personal work, my focussing on other stuff, my maldn. and keeping my life full and sustain my deconstructing socialisations, and then feel devastated and like a failure when I felt pangs of jealousy or insecurity. It felt like I'd done heaps of work, and those feelings meant that I was back to square one.

So my On-goingness lesson, was to realise there is no linear point to be reached. No end finish, no pinnacle, no tangible static point of perfection. Just on-

goingness. On-goingness that I Am "Doing An Open Relationship" right now, and thlt .ll this stuff; feelings, rough times, struggle, dealing with socialised stuff around all divisions Ind differences not just purely about relationships, was "It". IWR Doing It, IWRIS "doing" open relationships.

Which is kinda the same lesson when it comes to being anti-racist, destabilising whiteness Ind white privilege, Ind white supremacist structures, or maybe any dominating frameworks. That we are doing It now, that .1 the struggles and screw ups are not In vain, If we commit to making amends. That we ask for forgiveness, give forgiveness to others as well as ourselv... That we are gentle .nd generous with ourselves .nd others, Ind don't expect that we will do a few workshops, read a few books, have I few yarns, join • few groups, and never again be prey to or perpetuate and collude with dominant structures. That we don't expect we will be perfect after some point. The perfect anti-racist, the perfect feminist, the perfect activist, the perfect non-monogamist, the perfect InV that nlvIr ever screws up.

So for me, On-goingness In everything that I'm doing, makes things .Isler to cap. with .nd .llrA fram and see Ind live hollstcllIV. And I hope that I will get bltt.r .t all this stuff. Open relationships often get compared to the successes (not the failures) of monogamous relationships, who have a h.,d stlrt with aU the rules, boundaries and Ilumption. that go along with monogamy. So we start mostly from scratch without existing platforms, and without the personal skills. So of course It's going to be • bit rougher to begin with. But I feel that with on-goingness, we can see and acknowledge that we are doing it now, living and loving fn Its fullness and expansiveness. For me. living and loving in open relationships is .Iso .n expression of the celebration and worship not Of scarcity that Is.I too common, but of abundance. rm pretty chuffed about that, and so are my lovers, partner and their lovers.



SARAH TEA-REX

I remember seeing her for the first time when she walked past my room, and smiled. She was damn cute. I caught her eye and knew I had to meet her. After taking a moment to swoon, I ventured into the kitchen to use brewing a cup of tea as my excuse to say hello to her.

As I introduced myself I saw her beanie. The beanie she was wearing that has a patch which reads "poly". "Damn it!" I thought . . . myself, "Why am I plagued with always being attracted . . . the poly ones?"

A couple of months earlier in Montreal, Canada I had broken up with a girl because, as I told her, I had to just face the facts that I am, too insecure and old-fashioned for polyamory. I really liked her but I found her having a boyfriend as well as me to be really stressful. I thought that what I needed was the security of having one person who was committed to only me. I thought I was not confident enough about myself to feel . . . used someone liked me without the monogamous label telling me that's how they felt. I had told myself . . . all my Montreal friends before leaving that I had given polyamory a try and it just was not my thing.

But here I was crushing on this poly girl. I got to know her more and realized that I actually really liked her. We flirted a lot. Eventually we talked about how we felt and I was honest about my misgivings with polyamory. She told me about her several lovers and her experiences with polyamory.

She invited me . . . go dancing with her- dancing with her and her other lovers and her lovers lovers and their lovers lovers. I thought the whole situation was a little hilarious, absurd and awesome. I had never seen a queer poly community so honest and open. It was just a group of friends laughing together with seemingly little competition, animosity, or awkwardness between them.

That's what made me question the routes of where my "monogamist" identity had come from. It seemed like polyamory was made to work here in ways it never did for me in Montreal. I thought to myself that maybe there really aren't any rules and there's actually a huge range of relationship styles which suit us depending on the people we're with and the situations we're in. Maybe I had boxed myself into monogamy too quickly after only a couple of experiences with poly-dating. Instead of lumping myself under some pre-determined (and dare I say, capitalist) relationship script I could try to define each relationship on its own terms, each time.

I liked her and she liked me and it felt like something we should try to make work. So we talked about our insecurities, our boundaries, and our feelings towards each other. We talked and we talked and we talked and it was beautiful.

A few weeks, and many Buffy watching ambiguous friend-crush hang outs later, I started dating another girl too. She is beautiful, intelligent, witty, a little bit bad but also well and deeply caring and we totally connect. I like her more and more and more every time we're together. It's the first time I have ever been the one in a relationship who has had more than one lover. And it surprises me sometimes just how much I can like two people, be with two people, and respect and adore two people as completely different but awesome lovers at the same time.

She's taught me a lot about relationships and about myself. I have never communicated so clearly and openly with people I've dated. It's been really positive for me to take the time to consider what it is that I am actually comfortable with, what it is that makes me feel insecure, and how I can let my partner know when I'm feeling that way and how we can address it together. I realized that the comfort of pre-set boundaries of monogamy isn't really the best way of addressing my insecurities around how my lover is feeling about me. The comforting confines of monogamy aren't required if I can feel assured that the person I'm with likes me because they keep telling me I., because they keep holding my hand and because they come jumping onto the bed to give me cuddles and kisses. I don't need to be the silly person they like; I don't need to feel intimidated by their seemingly cooler other lovers, as long as I know they still like me. And I know now the possibilities of being really caring and affectionate with more than one person because I am living that reality too.

It's still really new to me. I don't know what shape the relationships I am in will take. I don't think I'm polyamorous. I am not really monogamous either. At various stages in my life I may find that I'm most comfortable just dating one person, or dating several, or having the people I'm dating just see me, or see several people themselves, or some type of pick 'n mix in-between. I think I just really like being with amazing people. My relationship style of preference isn't really definable- it's about talking, assessing, re-assessing, talking more, and listening lots.



NON-MONOGAMY

by Kerem

Thinking of my early non-monogamy experiences makes me cringe, I feel embarrassed thinking how stupid, young and irresponsible I was.

I remember we had this very fluid women's group and we talked about different things, and one week we talked about the topic of "non-monogamy". I was mesmerized by the idea. I remember talking to my boyfriend at the time about it and he wasn't very impressed. He said something which I think is still relevant today about how it's easier to be with different people, and only let the good side of them as opposed to sticking with one person even when things are less good.

I think the uncomplicated and shallow place I took the concept of non-monogamy to is fucked. I saw someone else whilst in a primary relationship, I'm not very impressed with that attitude anymore (although I don't think as a general rule it's a bad thing.)

I feel like some of my experiences, the things I said, people that I or my partners slept with while we were in a primary relationship etc. came from a position of lack of knowledge, vocabulary, emotional maturity and/or relationship experience. They also were the result of immense attraction, emotional bonds with close friends, and a healthy sense of adventure.

I may be harsh with myself but I think I didn't take enough responsibility for my actions. I didn't think through their effects and consequences on other people- especially the ones I loved most.

Today I see non-monogamy as something very different:

It's not about guilt tripping or having any of this "if you don't do this, then I can do that" or "fucking around". It's not about looking for excitement somewhere else instead of putting the effort where it really matters. It's not about feeling like if I don't get what I want, then the relationship is trapping me.

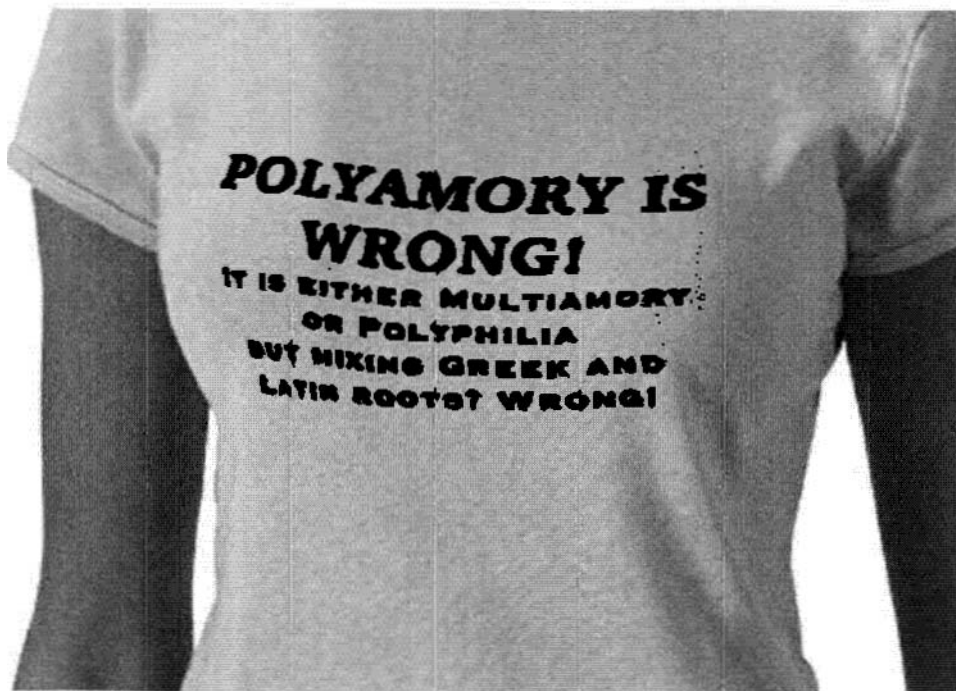
Non-monogamy for me **is** about **accepting** the **blurry** and fluid borders of friendship, love, intimacy **and sexual feelings**.

It's about defining my own boundaries and **accepting other people's**. **It's about being considerate** and **attentive**. It's about **being ready to** be out of your **socialized** comfort zone, **talking** endlessly **about feelings, being queer...**

It's about **sleeping** with your **best** friends **and feeling like** you **got** to know **them better, being happy** for your partner when they **sleep with** someone they like, **snuggling in bed** with a **good** friend. **having mind-blowing sex with your lover...**

My load friend **N** **helped** me **deal** (more **than once**) with **non-monogamy issues** and I still **remember when she said that** every **relationship is different**. It's not **a** formula. It depends on so many **things**, and **the most important thing** is to **listen to** people around you **and to yourself**.

I try to **fight off** my jealousy **and** possessiveness, but I **also** try to **accept** them. I'm pretty **sure** I'm not ready for **a full-on, open-relationship right now** (who knows **if** I ever will be), but I definitely feel **like** I'm **making** that choice.



MOLLY N JAO

by Emily

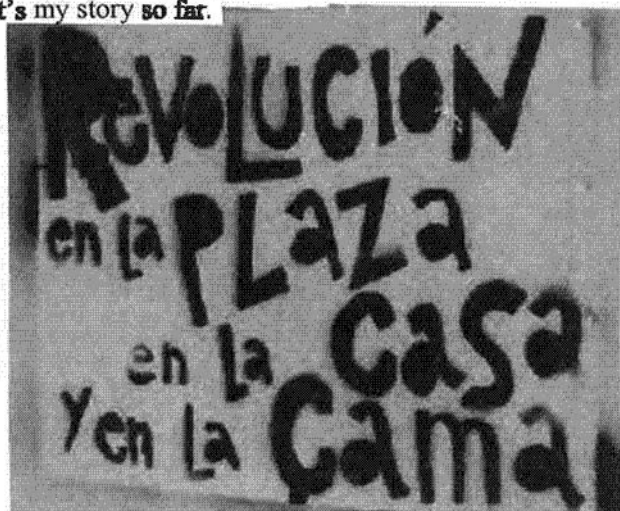
About three years ago I wrote an article about polyamory, proclaiming that monogamous relationships were mostly all doomed to suffocation and dndgery. At that time I was seeing three people, two of whom had been or were seeing other people while I was seeing them. There was a long period in my life where twas **partnered up to one person, a serial monogamist 10 to speak. Those men isolated me, made me feel second-place and at times controlled and abused me.** New polyamorous relationships became a **way** of finally breaking free of those constrained relationships and **making** decisions on what I actually wanted and needed in an **intimate** relationship, while nOI having to become some dickhead oppressor myself. Ironically I have now been with my current partner for almost three years, the last two of those years without having other partners, and now we are having a baby soon and planing to build a house and, well, create a life together. The whole thing has been a bit of a roundabout journey for me.

I grew up like I **think most kids grow UP. thinking rd meet a nice person** one day and get married and have a **family. Then I began to look** at marriage more deeply and decided **it was too controlling for me and** I questioned why I should need my **love to be confirmed in some legal or religious document. When I finally started going out with people it was almost always by their choice and under their terms** (whether they knew it or nOI) and I was shit at communicating my way out of things. When I started meeting radical activists and anarchists and learning more about anarchism and polyamory, it tumed my life around. I finally got the courage to initiate relationships on my terms, which meant discussing what we both wanted first and during the relationship. It was choice to feel **confident about what I wanted for myself and not feel ashamed, and to know a, much as possible what my partners wanted too. It felt even better that I didn't have to put all my needs in just one person and that they could accept that (well at least that's what they all said at first!).**

So this is the irony - well actually first I discovered I was really shit at dealing with jealousy and trust - but the ironic thing now is that I think I've found what I want in just one person. We're still committed to an open relationship and for things not to necessarily last forever but for the time being I feel we're content with just seeing each other (and friends and family of course) - that's, not to say we don't still get crushes or have other impossible loves. We're having to commit also to caring for and loving a child soon which is exciting and scary but also requires a lot more thinking if we're still open to having other lovers or ending our relationship if things stop working for us. We're still open-minded I'm hopeful we'll manage.

Sometimes it feels like we're cheating but if the purpose of polyamory, or I ... it, is to love openly and honestly with all your heart, without confinement or dishonesty, then that's what we're doing. I don't believe polyamory means having to have multiple lovers but being able to have multiple loves and lovers. To be honest, I find having one lover is a lot less stressful so doing time-consuming than planning your life around multiple partners in different towns but I do think we're really lucky to have found each other. Keeping some independence, our individuality and maintaining good relationships with friends so family is still a bit of a challenge sometimes, especially for me now I'm pregnant and feeling needy, but nothing like I've struggled with in past monogamous relationships. I find I take my relationships with friends and family more seriously now, although other factors in my life have also changed so it's hard to gauge things completely.

Overall I'm pretty happy. We're still in love and still passionate about each other and still have lots of friends and family around. Not quite the typical polyamory story you might have been hoping for but that's my story so far.



A summary of my poly situation:

I was monogamous from about 15ish until 22. Over the past year, I have begun exploring alternative ways to conduct relationships, and for the past few months I've been polyamorous. I have two long distance lovers, and at this stage we are exclusive to each other when we're in the same city (so far this hasn't happen for more than a week or two at a time, so it isn't too restrictive in terms of us being involved with other people). One of my lovers has another ongoing lover, who is monogamous to him. I'd identify as queer.

How did you first hear about poly relationship?

A couple of years ago, when I went to a queer group for the first time, I became friends with a hetro man who turned out to be poly. I've met some people who felt a sense of recognition and relief when they first heard about poly, but that wasn't the case for me. At the time I didn't think much of it. He was into a lot of 'weird' stuff (or so I thought at the time), so I just dismissed it as another of his crazy ideas. The first non theoretical poly situation I came across was when he got involved with a bi womyn, who it turned out was 'cheating' on him with another womyn. He responded to the situation by saying, well it wouldn't have been a problem if she had been open and honest with both of us, something I thought was extremely open minded of him. A year or so later, I started to get interested in feminism and queer politics. About the same time I stumbled across Wendy O'Matik at my girlfriend's nat. As I began to critique the messages society had given me, I realised there were alternatives to those constructs I was taught growing up that work better for me. I met a couple of womyn who were in polyamorous relationships, and watched how they conducted their relationships, and read everything I could get my hands on about poly.

Why or what attracted you to them?

After my girlfriend and I broke up (that was my last monogamous relationship) I realised that the types of relationships I'd had up until that point were not working for me. In traditional relationships, I felt isolated in a co-dependent couple, and had no time for community or self-discovery. I'm someone who wants to grow and learn and push myself emotionally a lot. I've found that for me, traditional relationships have made me feel safe and secure, which is nice for a little while, but ends up making me feel trapped. I want to learn to find security in myself, and I prioritise learning about and nurturing myself, rather than working at being half of a couple. I also want to learn to own my sexuality. I seem to have a pattern of getting into long-term serious relationships, and as a result I've never really learnt to do things such as flirt, ask someone on a date, or initiating getting involved sexually. Poly gives me the opportunities to do this. I like the idea of always being open to being involved with people, so if I sit down on the bus and start a conversation with the person opposite me, I am able to really explore that connection and see where it takes us. I like the idea of prioritising having a

connection with someone, and that this is flexible and may change forms many times, sometimes being sexual, sometimes not. I believe that a fluid and evolving relationship gives my lover(s) and I more space to grow and explore. I don't think we can or should try to own or contain another person.

Do you think queerness is connected to poly?

For me, the societal ideal of Mum, Dad, two kids and a white picket fence was no longer applicable once I acknowledged I was queer, and I let go of that ideal when I came out. I think I've had a little more room to explore what kind of relationships I want as a result. Being queer has given me some distance to be able to critique those messages I was given by society about relationships, family, commitment and love. I also think being queer has also made me deciding to be poly more acceptable to my family. They've already accepted I won't have the white wedding and that they might not have grandkids, so I think they feel less loss than they would have if I was a hetero woman.

What was different or more or less complicated - polyamory or monogamy?

I feel like poly is far more difficult, but also really rewarding. I'm new at this, so it may get easier in time, but at the moment, being poly is hard work. It's pushing me emotionally. I'm learning about how I react - and this often isn't how I would've expected, what my fears are, how to communicate, how easy it is to miscommunicate, what my boundaries are, etc. I feel like I'm constantly facing myself and learning new things about myself. Poly also takes a lot more time to work well. For me, I need a lot of time to react, process, and write. A lot of time is also taken up negotiating, discussing, and working things through with my lover(s). I feel like when I was monogamous I had a lot more room to mess up. Although it wasn't particularly healthy, I feel like when I was monogamous I could hide out for a bit and not deal with things, or be passive aggressive, or whatever. If I do that within poly, it affects a lot more people and has greater consequences, so it's not really an option. For me, monogamy felt safer, simpler, and a lot more stable, but in the long-term made me feel like I wasn't growing as a person. Being poly, I'm learning to love with all my insecurities and fears along for the ride. This is scary, and feels very different from the illusion of 'together forever' security I felt within monogamy.

How has your definition of poly changed since you started practising it?

Before I started practising poly I think I had this idea that because I believed in these ideals - that people can love more than one person. It once, that I do not own another person or their sexuality, that if I love someone it would be a positive thing when they had amazing (sexual/intimate) experiences with other people, and so on - that this would mean I would become this open, secure, loving person. It's been a bit of a reality check to realise I'm still the same flawed person, and that just because I'm trying to redefine my relationships in a way that, in keeping with my ethics, doesn't mean I'm not taking all my insecurities and faults along with me. It's been humbling to realise I get jealous and possessive and scared a lot. It's also been really wonderful to learn that I can sit with that and develop tools to work constructively with feelings that used to seem insurmountable. On

the flipside, I don't think I'd really thought about the wonderful everyday little nitty gritty moments of poly. There are moments when it all clicks into place and this huge idealistic concept becomes B reality. For example, when T suddenly realise I am excited that someone else gets to experience how amazing my lover is. Or when the lover Tam with reminds me to text my other lover goodnight. I also hadn't realised I'd feel guilt, or that I'd spend so much time thinking about other people and how my actions would affect them. Or that I'd spend so much time processing my lovers' reactions to me being sexual with other people.

Any last word or advice?

Something that I've found really intriguing is that for me, being poly feels very similar to being in recovery from an eating disorder. I had anorexia as a teenager, and so many of the things I learnt in recovery I am learning again on a whole new, deeper level through being poly. For example, learning that my emotions won't kill me, but that my reactions (self-destructive behaviours) might. Another example is learning to identify how I'm feeling and what's motivating my behaviours, and to communicate these things, and ask for what I need. This was something I really struggled with and had to work hard at during my recovery from anorexia. Another thing that I had to learn when I first started recovery was to trust that things will work out. At the moment I'm (re)learning daily how to sit tight with uncomfortable feelings, that they will pass, and that just because something feels bad doesn't mean it isn't useful. I'm (re)learning how to self-soothe and to find security in myself rather than in an external person or thing. Another thing I'm learning on a deeper level is that being vulnerable and open is actually a really strong powerful thing, rather than the weakness I thought it was when I was sick.

I'd be interested to hear of other people's experiences around poly as a pathway for recovery as it's not something I've read about, and I don't feel like it's recognised as a valid recovery option by the mental health profession at the moment. However, I don't think poly would've been very helpful when I was, till actively eating disordered, or during the first year or two of recovery.

⊛ (I use hit and ze instead of her and she to describe my lover because ze is transgendered and does not identify fully as either a woman or a man)

Constancy

You're jealous if I kiss this girl or that,
You think I should be constant to one mouth?
Little you know of my too quenchless drought:
My sister, I keep faith with love, not lovers.

[, I
Elsa Gidlow (1923)

PRISCILLA

I have sat down to write this piece so many times. For the last wee while it seems like both who I am and what my relationships are up to have been rapidly changing. It feels like this has settled somewhat, or some clarity has arrived, at least for the former, so I am seizing the moment. I could have written during that time about the fluid nature of identity and relationships. but I was not feeling ease with these shifting stoles.

2009 was the first year I addressed my history of sexual abuse (or in other words, the first time I was looking at my history and seeing that the sexual experiences in my childhood had power dynamics that were extremely abusive.)

I thought it was this (starting the process of addressing this history) that was causing my unease with my identity and my relationships. but it was actually because this was the last new bit of information. the last part of my identity and worldview. that I wanted to challenge before taking some time to integrate it all.

A town made of Lego is a great visual for me to understand this situation. Each building representing a part of oneself, either an aspect of ones identity, or a worldview one holds, a lens one sees the world through.

sa 'sexual abuse': mine. the reality that it exists in the world. the high statistics, the effects, the lack of support and belief for the survivors... was the last building to come down in my city. And obviously my city doesn't consist of just one building.

For me, buildings coming down isn't a bad thing, almost the opposite, it means im becoming far more aware of myself. Of course it requires effort though. to really look at yourself and your views.

Sexual abuse for me is a big one. with many levels/floors, and the building actually had corridors that connected to other buildings, But once I became aware that this building needed some attention, there were no more buildings left. It was the last to fall.

I had been deconstructing other buildings, and the ways that I had relationships/polyamory was one of these. Others were things like questioning my gender (again), deconstructing capitalism (further), looking at sexual abuse (as above). musing's on the most effective ways to combat ignorance and create the social change I wanted. and many many more.

In terms of lego cities and the deconstruction of buildings I think everyone might have a different limit or pace that they like to work at. A different number of buildings in their city perhaps. or maybe some people have decided to not start work on a new building until the last one is reconstructed again.

This experience is not a **first** for me, it is not the first **time** my entire city **has** gone under **reconstruction** and I am certain it will not be the last.

I came across postmodernism, feminist thought (that wasn't being slammed) and the concept that things are socially constructed when I was 18. This was my **first** identity 'crises', or full scale city reconstruction, which I **like** to call my 'postmodern breakdown'. I wore mainly polar fleece **pants** and a thermol (I was in Dunedin) for 6 months because all other clothing seemed to **express** something of who I was. and I had no idea what I was wanting to say about myself.

After those 6 months, my eyes were open **like** never before, my middle name became 'challenge'. I wanted to and was willing and ready to, deconstruct and challenge any aspect of my identity and worldviews. I questioned everything. nothing had a Truth.

I'm **sure** before **this first** 'breakdown' I no doubt would have been challenging perhaps one building at a time, or a few, and then integrating them. But not necessarily the entire city.

I've come to a full scale city building project again. This time not with the polar fleece pants and thermol. but definitely with some **construction** zone tape **going** up around the perimeter, **for** safety of **course while** building is underway.

I've spoken so far about the conscious creation of identities. But what does this have to do with **polyamory**? And what does this construction tape symbolize?

Well polyamory **was** on 8 of my **buildings**. Coming **across even** the **idea** of polyamory helped me to take down a **building**. Now however, I'm not in the **take** down stage now, I'm in the putting up stage, the construction stage (consciously trying to **re-create** and integrate what I have unlearned). I'm needing to step **back** from any further challenges, it's not appealing to jump into the deep end of the pool anymore (**while** the city is down). I want to **walk** into the **pool** slowly **with** my feet on the ground.

Therefore, the tape for me symbolizes a firmer boundary around people's entry into the city. Something solid that clearly shows that people with sledge hammers need to stay out for a while, even though sledge **hammers** are beautiful.

This need to not **be** challenged right now **is** of **course** applying to my polyamory as well. **But** how and what **polyamory** without challenge **looks like** is proving difficult to **visualize**.

It seems like an oxymoron to not want to be challenged yet to remain polyamorous, and this was definitely how I viewed it up until now. that polyamory had to encompass large challenges to the self.

That was the only **kind** of angle I was **picking up** from books. and I think I

was also feeling social pressure to be 'radical' in the way I explored polyamory.

Polyamory was about freedom, and deconstructing your Jealousy so that you did not restrict those you love. When I first came across poly, I was a lover of the deep end. I jumped into it full force,

I still believe in the freedom but I don't feel like the only truly revolutionary way to achieve it is by jumping into the deep end,

As I said earlier, the construction tape is the sign that no more challenge can take place. and it is also a barrier. Those who will be invited into the city, and maybe even attracted to the city, will be different while it is under construction to when it still had buildings standing and was happy for them to be taken down. The tape symbolizes the need for some kind of 'conventionality' within 'polyamory'. These ideas are not mutually exclusive to me.

So this is where my relationship with polyamory is at at the moment. I **know** where I'm at as a polyamorous individual (not wanting to be challenged). But what that materially **looks like** for the relationships I'm in, and whether these needs will be harmonious with theirs, are things that. In some cases. are currently in the pipe line.

The question was asked "what are your main difficulties with polyamory?" I don't know if I would call these difficulties. but definitely musings on the aspects that effect the experience.

One thing I have found difficult is having to start from scratch, with not many visuals of how things can be. to get ideas from, Especially when it comes to wanting ideas of how to have poly in the 'city' when the city is an area with no more buildings i.e, no more capacity for 'challenge'. But actually. this is not presenting as a difficulty in all my relationships.

Another factor is the level of attachment I have with the person. Maybe the likelihood of something challenging me is higher with deeper attachment. But then there are different kinds of attachment too. So many other factors are racing through my head: whether the relationship was started as a polyamorous relationship, whether there are other relationships while you're together polyamorously, and I guess ultimately. what kind of connection you have with that person. I feel the core of the connection **will** stay the same but as the individuals change over time, what they experience as the pulls and draw backs of that connection will change also.

All of these have been factors that have played in to my experience of difficulty or ease within poly. There are no definitive outcomes to any of these factors though. Each situation will be utterly unique. Each relationship is different and different needs come up in relation to that

person. I have found that my needs **in** one relationship have been entirely different to my **needs** in another. The needs **are** belonging to that specific **relationship**, and not outside of it.

With a lack of representations within society I have found it easy to think that what I was asking for wasn't valid. I wasn't seeing representations of people having relationships like me, so I would start to doubt myself and doubt that what I needed was OK. To back up the validity of what you're asking for should never be required.

Wendy-O-Matik's idea that **polyamory is "not about freedom from responsibility, it's about responsible freedom"** resonates **strongly** with me around needs being valued in relationships. I feel as though **people** often misconstrue **polyamory** with the misogynist 'free love' ideas connected to **the** seventies. Where freedom is prioritized to a level where people are taught to not **listen** to themselves and their **needs**, with the cost sometimes becoming a **lowering of self** worth.

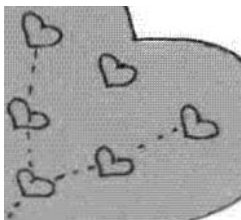
I haven't put much **in here** about the ins and outs of the **polyamorous** relationships I've had, **but for me what is more present and alive is how to have polyamory in a way that feels ok.** Right now **that** could potentially **mean** a more "conventional" **polyamory**. **A** not jumping in the deep end,

Polyamory has **changed** who I am, **but for now, it's about taking a step back.** In **actually**, I can't **step back**, I'm **stepping forward but maybe just stepping** in a different way. **with** a different **shoe** on or something. **A** construction boot, as opposed to **the** usual knee high. Similar in many ways, but used **for** different purposes, different paces, with a different feeling about each).

Polyamory does not **have** to be **all about** suffering and **processing**, if you're wanting **something** that **isn't** in line with the **perceived notions** of what **'freedom' is**, that **is** alright 100. People **being** **honest** about what **their needs are** in a **relationship** is what **freedom** is **all about**.

A close friend recently said to me...**"that the most radical thing is to hear yourself and be true to that:**

For polyamory that couldn't be more true.



We were living in a big autonomist house project in Germany. Dysfunctional in its own ways but somehow still holding it together through will, stubbornness and love. In this house were 25 people, a changing amount of dogs and one cat. Give or take. All tucked together in a 4 story falling apart building on a street where you could go for weeks without leaving. Our street had everything - 4 other house projects, squat bars, social spaces, bakery and supermarket. Most importantly: good neighbours. All my crushes I met here - even once I had left.

I was living there with my girlfriend, but we were in different rooms and on different floors. We (essentially) shared the same teeny tiny flatmate my girlfriend and I with 8 other people and including very visible and clumsy. And I literally bring people home, so it was all our few agree (mb). Not here couldn't be kept even if you wanted to (no secrets was however one of everyone knew business, where sound carried and the doors had a tendency to no matter you shut them!

We developed codes: book in front of meaning don't even knock, another, enter with warning. We pushed being openly affectionate around each other and our lovers.

I wanted it to last forever.

It was the summer of 2007. The air seemed charged with possibilities - violence, rage, friendships and love, competing for prominence, all hopelessly tangled. Occasional moments of gentleness and rest but mostly we were all tense, anticipating.

I felt hungry for everything. It was the build up to the G8 demonstrations near Rostock. The police had raided projects all over northern Germany, and police riot vans drove up and down our street literally every 5 minutes. Only fired everyone up even more.

All my relationships seem 10x intense.

Here a romantic evening was sitting on the roof with my comrades as the sun went down, looking out for the moment it would all kick off. Getting drunk and climbing into empty buildings to fuck.

Sometimes romantic: sitting in kitchen discussing our plans and demo strategy, fine tuning our affinity groups, building on our

Not at all romantic but often done: interrogating group dynamics and intimate relationships. Questioning how it would work having a couple in the affinity group (even partially a polyamor... one), and how our relationship would play out in the stressful situations of Rostock. Is it wise for a couple to also be partnered - 'demo buddies' within the group?

What if lovers in the group had a falling out? The whole group would be triggered by conflict and hurt within the group? Would the lovers stay loyal to each other to the detriment of everyone else? Squew the group decision making? Someone point out, sometimes the whole house projects have a 'no couples' rule. (how they define 'couple' I'm not sure)

What if the couple opens out into the group, other lovers are taken in the group and jealousy swallows us? ("7)

But friends who are not fucking each other fall out too, with equally disastrous and dramatic consequences. In the end we simply worked with who we trusted. I loved, who we felt compatible with when scared and running/doing. Some of us were lovers and some not. And we promised to keep talking about it...

Though I personally didn't, not when it got hard. I kept moving close with an ex-lover, even when it hurt, terribly, and said nothing. A changed intimacy I at once adored and wanted to look away from. Is that a sign of miscommunication, toughness or growing stronger?

Ah. But now I mess the times up very terribly. I'll let the vague story. It's a whole other story.

Yours, Heorietta

Stumbling into the Open...

by L.

I had always thought of myself as the perfect monogamist - loyal and committed. I had the occasional burning crush on someone else, but I usually wilted and it fizzled and died without much fanfare. I hadn't really 'cheated' on someone since I was about thirteen; instead, I had a string of serious relationships (a serial, perfect monogamist...) each lasting for several years. And inevitably, these always ended because of issues around control, power or jealousy. I felt like there was a big contradiction in me somewhere I couldn't locate; on one level I thought I was doing everything right (being loyal committed etc) and yet these relationships always ended. I felt like there must be something inherently wrong with me, like I had an expiry date. I convinced myself that if I just made myself more agreeable, more easy-going, less-passionate and opinionated things would surely change and I would, eventually, find someone who would put up with a diluted version of me for a longer time!

I had been in a relationship with F for over a year and things were going okay, but not great. I left to go India to work on some research with a professor of mine and more generally to travel and be another privileged white westerner in search of some brand of enlightenment in the 'third world' (which I never found, finding instead grinding poverty, legacies of colonialism and the rapid sprawl of tourist industries - I got pretty depressed). We had agreed that we would meet up over there at some point. But by the time he came to join me a few months later I had fallen for someone else and was in a bit of turmoil as to who I should 'choose'. It had never occurred to me that I wouldn't have to choose, that I could be in a relationship with both of them at once.

Non-monogamy was not a conclusion anyone of us came to easily or naturally or even because we wanted to, it was simply a matter of what would mean we all roughly got what we wanted, to put it crudely. No-one wanted to give up anything and so we decided that I could be with both of them at once. When we arrived at this decision I felt nervous and excited but I was still convinced that it was in some way wrong. I was also anxious to make everyone happy - I felt responsible as the one who was non-monogamous while they were only with me. I felt like people would think I was being greedy, manipulative, dishonest and I was at pains to prove them wrong. Having never read anything about open relationships or really spoken to people who've given them a go, I had no theoretical background or stories from other people's experiences to strengthen my own. Instead, I felt like there must be something unnatural about wanting to be with more than one person. To be fair to my feelings these sorts of relationships

aren't really widely approved of, and certainly not in a public way; a lot of people, including my mum, didn't really approve or understand and with time people it became a taboo subject.

Things started out pretty rocky. There was a messy marriage break-up involved and a lot of trauma around that. There was the grief and depression of my original partner at feeling not good enough. There was my own perpetual anxiety about whether or not I could stretch myself between two people. It was pretty messy. And it got even harder when we came back to New Zealand I had to deal with this oddly configured relationship in the male-laden social contexts of home.

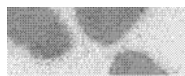
But there were all sorts of blessings despite this. We all got along really well and could hang out together as a three, we even went on a week holiday together. It was pretty exceptional. They hung out and became friends in their own right so I didn't even facilitate their acceptance of one another in the end. I became excellent at communicating my feelings and my actions, I became clearer about when I needed alone time, and most importantly for me, I became incredibly honest with myself and others.

Perhaps one of the most important factors in this first experiment with non-monogamy was that after I came back to NZ I moved into a house with some amazing women. This changed a lot for me. The radical feminist context of my new house gave me a language for all my mixed up thoughts and feelings and exposed me to many more ideas and conversations I might otherwise have gone without. One of my new housemates had experimented with non-monogamy before and we talked openly about some of its benefits and pitfalls. It was so great to be able to discuss what I was experiencing and put it in the contexts of gender, power, age and privilege. I no longer felt odd, unnatural or greedy but began to feel stronger in myself and my relationships. I became more critical of the conventional monogamy we swallow so early on in life and began to place less importance on those particular kinds of relationships and more importance on friendship.

Eventually, through these ongoing discussions and my increasing discomfort with some of the attributes of my relationship I decided to end it. The discrepancies between what I believed and the issues presented to me by our age and power differences simply became too much, not to mention the degree of secrecy needed. I also felt an increasing desire to be with women and my attraction to men dwindled. My initial relationship with F remains constant but we are much less lovers than very supportive friends - who hug a lot. I have just recently started a relationship with a friend of mine and she lives with F so that it seems pretty complex on the

surface but so flr it hils been working out okay. They like IMnl with each other and hans out a lot too. It can be hard visiting them thou,h and tryln, to decide whose bed to stay In what nllht - even though one relationship Is sexual and one Isn't the levels of intimacy, but we keep talking. They also live with another good friend so we often end up spending lots of time all together, at the expense of quality alone dme with each! I sometimes feel the same anxieties - I feel a little stretched, like I'm not convinced I have enou.h Qf me to go around. Sometimes I wonder If monogamy would just be easier - it's more acceptable Bnd I wouldn't have to conceal things from my filmly. But It's already easier than last time so rm hopeful...

I've never felt scornful of people who chose monogamy for whatever reason, everyone has to be free to make the best choices for them, but I am htlppy to have discovered the reason (or maybe just one of them) for my 'expiry date'. My commitment to the community of women and thlldren I am now part of means that I feel freer to make the right decisions for me on my own terms. I have found that issues of power ilnd control matter less to me now than they once did. To me being non-monOlilmous Isn't Just about having multiple lovers but about choosing to live communally as much as possible, to help people raise children communally, and to put as much love and effort into all the special relationships in life. These days I try to be Just as committed and supportive to my frlends as I do to my lovers - it doesn't always work but we all try! There are a lot of Issues about being poly that I haven't dealt with yet. Most importantly, I haven't experienced the other side of It! I have always been the one to have other relationships and know that I might well find that experience quite difficult were It reversed. At least when that happens I will have a bit more support, reading and conversations behind me to help me through some of the difficulties!



... to feel more driven
than you have ever felt In your lifetime
to defy the odd.
at all coata
and to finally embrace dreams
as your only way out

Wendy O-Matik

FELICITY

Open Hearts and Minds: a few thoughts on polyamory

"One must use sexuality to discover or invent new relations"

- Michel Foucault, 1996:370.

About six and a half years ago I became introduced to the concept of polyamory as a relationship philosophy based on honesty and equality. The notion of polyamory rang true with me, although my whole life I had considered having sex with someone else while in a relationship to be a terrible act of betrayal. Like many ideas that threaten the structures modern capitalism is based on, polyamory has been deemed unworkable and is predominantly unthinkable for most. I grew up believing that there were one or two (if you were lucky) people 'destined' to be your 'true' love. I believed that monogamy was a sign of commitment and the mark of 'true' love, and that cheating was a sign that the person was not really meant for you and didn't really love you. I strived to be faithful to my partners and deemed my wandering eyes - and those of my friends - as normal but not something that should ever be acted on. I dried the tears of my friends as they were cheated on and I gave anti-cheating advice to those that were 'tempted'. It seems that people desiring other people while in a relationship is frequent and pervasive. I have been 'cheated on' (that I know of) twice. The first time it happened, I surprised myself by not kicking out my partner or breaking up, but by seeing the situation as a sign that our relationship needed improvement. I then used this experience to help cope years later with the second revelation of a partner cheating. Both times it was not the devastating blow I thought it would be, and I realized that it was not useful to blame myself, but rather for my partner and I to spend time improving our relationship. I found that working on our communication skills and being honest with each other was super helpful, as was practicing dealing with such honesty, which could be hard. It's good communication, after all, that lies at the base of any strong relationship. polyamorous 01" otherwise.

Learning about polyamory. I realized that I didn't need to constantly quell my attraction to others, and was validated that such attraction was okay. This was a radical time for me of learning that I could listen to my own feelings and not think of myself as a bad person for being attracted to someone when I was 'taken'. Like so many other structures in my life, I realized that the monogamous long-term romantic relationship was only one way of having a relationship. This kind of relationship is one that works

well to support the operation of capitalism. through aiding the smooth flow of inheritance. It is the basis of the modern nuclear family with the man at its head, both parents helping each other to work, pay taxes, and consume, and children continuing the capitalist-values **instilled** by the parents as they become adults.

While some people develop a tight support group of friends, for many people the closest relationships they have are with their **partners**. By **limiting** partners to one at a time, they are limiting the joy of having such close relationships. By having many different kinds of close relationships - romantic, sexual, and plutonic - we widen our support **networks** which makes us stronger to fight against the exploitation of capitalism.

It is thinking about friends that made polyamory 'click' for me. I had **always** thought that you could only have 'true' romantic feelings for one **person** at a time, but I realized that just **like** when I make a new friend, when I meet someone that I feel attracted to. it doesn't take **away** from the feelings I have for others, rather it **enlarges** the circle of mutual positivity and support. I have an Infinite amount of love to give and to **grow**, and when I make a new friend I don't have to remove an old friend from my life in order to enjoy my new friendship.

My partner and I are practicing the primary partner model. This works **for** us because we have a strong foundation and are committed long-term to dancing through life together. For us, a casual one-off sexual encounter is okay, but if we think that there is the possibility of entering into a relationship with someone else, we need to discuss it with each other first. Ideally this works as a checking-in process where my partner and I talk about how things are going with us, and if this new relationship is highlighting any issues we need to work through in our own relationship with each other we take this chance to make our relationship stronger,

Some things that I've learnt:

boundaries are important. These can take time to figure out, and sometimes I'm unsure what my boundaries are until they have been crossed. It is important to take time to establish what each of you needs to journey safely through polyamory. I think it is a good idea to have regular conversations about how each of you are feeling, and to regularly reassess your boundaries, and be prepared to add new ones, or rethink older ones because feelings and situations change. This **applies** to **lovers** as well as **partners**.

Communication is key, It is important to be honest with your lover if you think other deep attractions are developing. It is also imperative to be completely honest with other lovers about your poly lifestyle, With my first lover, I was so excited that the person I had been attracted to for a long time was attracted to me back that I decided to wait for a few dates before I told them that I was in a committed relationship. I just wanted to enjoy being with this person in what I thought was an uncomplicated way for a few days. However, this completely exploded when my partner, excited for me. drunkenly and preemptively congratulated my new lover- who was understandably upset - on bedding me. It **quickly** ended with one of those stereotypical scenes in a **park** where we return each other's things, and I still shudder now at my past self whenever I see that person around. Honesty from the beginning is clearly a successful strategy, Further, I try to put myself in my partner's and my lovers' positions, thinking about how they might feel around each other, I continually check in with them, talking about for instance how it will feel if we're all not the same **event**, and any thing they might want me to do to make the situation smoother for everyone.

I've learnt that it's easy to get carried **away** with the excitement of a new crush. It is important to step back until there has been adequate time for my primary partner to accept the idea of the possibility of a relationship with the new person, Sometimes this means not seeing my **crush** for a while, It can be difficult, but I need to accept how my partner is feeling and take necessary steps to make sure they are feeling good.

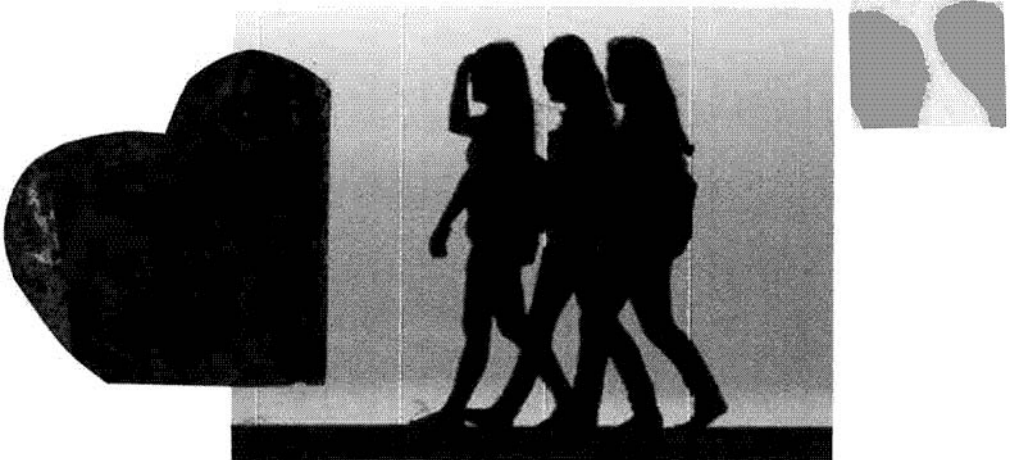
Reassurance is fundamental, No matter how strong my partner and I are, it is important for us to hear that we are still attracted to one another, that we still think each other is great, and that we still love being with each other, especially when a new lover is introduced into the relationship,

Jealousy needs to be explored and dealt with. Reassurance from my partner is a good start to working through jealousy, but I have found the advice of Wendy O-Matic (author of Redefining Our Relationships) really helpful for when I have moments of jealousy. Wendy O-Matic points out that often we have a tendency to blame the person that we think is 'making' us jealous, but jealousy is an emotion created within ourselves, and thus it is through an exploration of ourselves that we can allay the jealousy. Once I acknowledge this, I can then examine the layers of the jealousy to

try and get to **the** heart of why I feel jealous. I used to often get jealous when my partner was out with another lover. Thinking this **through**, I **realized that** it wasn't about my **partner** being with someone else. It was about me being lonely, so I made sure that **when my partner** was on a date I would hang out **with my friends**, **go on a date**. or do nice things by myself.

Don't compare. It's easy to spend a lot of time contemplating whether or not my partner's other lovers are smarter, more attractive, funnier, and better in bed than me. I have learned that this train of thought is not helpful. **The way** I see my partner's lovers **is different**. to **the way my partner sees** them, and I need to ensure that I don't confuse my **insecurities** with actualities. Each lover **brings new qualities** to our **lives** and these are not better than the qualities I have to give, **just different**. I also remind myself that if **my primary lover** did not need me **desirable** they would not be with me in the **first** place. I usually have a fairly **strong** level of **self-esteem**, which I think **is useful** in feeling good about my partner's **lovers** - I need to ensure **that** this remains **strong**, and **will** communicate **with** my partners and friends if I need reassurance, as feeling good **about** myself means I can **feel good about** my **partner's other** lovers.

Being polyamorous challenges me to be a better person. It allows me to **constantly learn** about **myself** and others. Polyamory is based on being open: open to new possibilities, open to different ways of loving, open to all of **your** lovers. It is not about lying, cheating, dishonesty, or hiding your feelings. Polyamory is not for everyone. But in my ideal world, having **multiple** romantic relationships based on honesty and good communication would be the norm. Being with someone that I can be physically, mentally, and emotionally close with, who I can **share** ideas with, wrap my **arms around** and **love**, and learn **from**, is a life-changing and life-affirming experience. Why should I limit these relationships?



DANNY

Good Slut, Bod Slut

When I chose my **life** of polyamory, I was **desperately worried** that my friend9 would think I was some sort of **sex-obsessed selfish pervert**, and judging by some of their initial reactions, **my** fears weren't entirely unjustified. So I **made** sure I **distanced** myself from all those nasty notions of 'bad' sluttcry **we're** all so familiar with; I was the very model of **the** 'Ethical Slut.'

What do I mean **by** that? What is **polyamory**? Well, it's a **complex**, difficult thing to define, but at its most basic it's a commitment to romantic or **sexual relationships that** aren't exclusive. In other words, you may have a relationship with your partner, and he or she may have **another partner** or more than one, and so might you. You might belong to a triple, instead of **the** more conventional couple we're all used to. or even a quad. You might **share** a house, or may live in **separate** homes, dividing your time **between partners**. Sounds **wack**, right? But polyamorists will tell you it's only natural, **that the lifelong exclusive** romantic relationship **we've** all come to **expect** in the **Western** world is a cultural invention, and we **can** actually choose what works best for us each individually.

There's a whole new language of relationships being **worked** out to deal with the complexities of polyamory... it gets pretty **complicated**. There's your Primary **Partner(s)**, **the person** or **persons** with whom you are in your most significant relationship, then there's your Secondary and **even** Tertiary **partners** with whom **you** have slightly less involved relationships. To **clarify** - polyamory **isn't just a being** in a couple that fools around a bit on the side, **like** 'swinging.' **because you can actually** have **more** than **one** Primary Partner (i.e.: **everyone's** on the same footing), such as in a Triangle relationship. And it gets **marc complicated** than that... your **relationship** **clln** be closed (i.e.: nobody new can be brought in - that's called Polyfidelity) or open to **llynone** (what some polyamorists jokingly can Polyfuckery).

The important point here, the **REALLY important** bit, is that it's all honest and consensual- **everyone** involved knows what's **going** on, and is **free** to **participate** or not. In other words, it's NOT 'cheating,' because no **agreements** are being broken. In **fact**, polyamory is **all** about honest

communication, negotiation and respect for the people you're involved with. It's NOT a traditional polygamous **harem**, where one man has seven! **women** at his **beck** and call (the **stereotypical straight-boy** dream), in **fact**, if you **go** onto any **polyamory** website you'll **find** women are pursuing non-monogamous relationships just **as** much as men **are**, and that **they're happy** calling the llbots*.

Polyamorists say **they're** just being realistic, that the Number One relationship hang-up in the **Western** world is 'cheating' and being 'cheated on,' that dishonesty around non-monogamy is **widespread** and wrecks a lot of **otherwise good relationships**, and that **they're** just **accepting** human **nature** for what it is and moving past all the guilt and hurt by dealing with **the** issues in ways that are respectful and honest. **They** don't think polyamory is right for **everyone**, **they** stress that it's NOT a fix for **a bad** relationship (in fact it'll just **make** a bad **relationship worse**), and they point out that it **takes** work - **LOTS** of **work**, and good communication skills. In **fact**, think of all the work that **goes** into a monogamous relationship, and multiply **that by the** number of **partners** in the poly relationship, and that should be enough to put **you off**, right? But even so, polyamorists will tell you it's worth **it**, that "love **shared** is love multiplied."

The polyamorist is **careful** to mention that it's about love, not sex, and **very** often **they** reject **labels like heterosexual**, homosexual and bisexual when talking about themselves **because** those terms lead people to focus on the Rookie - who **gets it**, with whom, and how often. Poly **people** frequently point out **that they often** have fewer sexual partners than people who practise serial **monogamy**, and that **sometimes their** relationships don't even involve sex at all. A lot of polyamorists say **that friendship IS** • kind of polyamory... we don't **expect** our friends not to have other friends, we accept that they might not want exactly **the** same things as **we** do, we let them live and grow and **learn** from others. It **takes** a lot of **trust**, **great** communication **skills**, and a willingness to **tackle** the **hard stuff head** on (like jealousy and insecurity).

The long and the short of it is that people who practice polyamory **make** a distinction **between** what they do and what people generally think of when they think about non-monogamy, which is dishonesty, deception, and

rampant, indiscriminate promiscuity. Look at us, poly people say, **we're** respectable!!

In **other** words, they don't want to look like the **'bad' slut**.

Who is this 'bad' slut? We're **all** familiar with her/him. **S/he** is villainized in television, movies and popular song, **because** s/he **has casual** sexual relationships **that** don't involve love, whether through 'cheating,' swinging, or just good ol' fashioned promiscuous singlehood. The **'bad' slut** **ISN'T** someone who **cheats** on a partner because s/he's **met** Someone s/he likes better and then leaves the first partner for the second, that's pretty commonplace these days and, while hurtful, is generally accepted as just doing serial **monogamy** badly. No, the 'bad' slut is usually female (when it's a guy his whoring around is usually **celebrated** - double standards people!!), s/he's someone who enjoys sex for the sake of it and is happy to have it outside of relationships. And in our contemporary culture, that's just not on.

Sociologists tell **us** that this state of affairs was set up by **heterosexual couples** **hundreds** of years ago, **when** romantic love **stopped** being just an adulterous liaison in the **royal** courts of Europe and started **being seen** (in the West at least) as a good basis for marriage. It's not too much of a jump from sex **as an** expression of love **within marriage** to sex as an expression of love **before** marriage, as long as the two people do **actually** intend to **get** married. And **from** that it's no big step to sex as an expression of love without marriage ever actually **entering** the **equation**, and to loving sexual relations **between people** of the lame **sex who aren't** allowed to **get** married. But it's a much bigger jump from **this** kind of sex **as** part of a loving, intimate relationship to sex just for the fun of it, outside of a relationship, with whoever **we** want to have it with. That's why promiscuity is **still** frowned on, why gay and lesbian couples can be together and be respectable **and** accepted, as long as they keep the sex in relationships.

As a culture, we don't **like** people having casual sex, we tend to think it's **something you** grow out of, or happily give up when you meet "the One." Even **recent** shows like **Sex and the City**, for all their boasting of being about empowered women enjoying their sexuality, ultimately **preach** the old **lesson** that the **most satisfying** and fulfilled sex life is one that **leads**

(even in the most roundabout way) to the traditional "Happily Ever After." Maybe that's what's behind the recent rise in the popularity of polyamory: it's non-monogamy, but it's still playing by the rules. Kinda.

But there's a problem with polyamorists calling themselves the "Ethical Sluts." It implies that polyamory is the *only* ethical non-monogamy, it implies that people who are happy to enjoy sex outside of committed relationships are incapable of being honest with or respectful of their sexual partners. Essentially it reinforces all those old notions about the 'bad' slut, condemning all those whose non-monogamy takes other forms, such as the open marriage, friends-with-benefits or fuck-buddies, or sexually active but confirmed singledom.

Personally, I'm happiest in committed emotional relationships with almost two or three people, whether or not it involves sex. But I have plenty of friends who similarly aren't the monogamous type, who don't identify as polyamorous, and who are quite capable of being responsible and considerate of their sexual partners' feelings and bodies. And then I have those weird and wonderful friends who are somewhere-in-between, being in honest, committed triples, quads etc, and still "playing the field." Good on them. I say, if that's what makes them happiest.

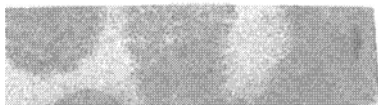
And yes, I have plenty of friends in exclusive, monogamous partnerships who are perfectly happy that way, and I'm perfectly happy for them too. I cry at their weddings and civil unions, I celebrate their engagement parties and anniversaries. There really is so much diversity out there, and it's all beautiful. I wish everybody could see that.

- For more info about polyamory, see (among others):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v0SX6SILmDs>

<http://www.polyamoryonline.org/>

www.polyamory.org/



FIRST & SECOND TeiCH

by Taika

11m pretty sure I Will polyamorous before I realized 11m queer. Not that I knew there was a word or a definition for the way I felt - occasionally I just fell in love with several people at the same time or if I was with one person I was fighting my crushes or sexual attraction to other people. My family and social environment never taught me this was okay or there could be even something in between about it. From that I concluded, that I must be wrong, that I was intrinsically disturbed. I desperately tried several times to be in a stay in monogamous relationships but it just didn't work out for me.

I think there was more than one reason why it didn't work out. I was holding a whole list of expectations linked to a committed love (dream) relationship which I myself could not even satisfy. And I was scared of being close with someone after my best friend had dumped me. One day I swore to myself that I'd never give my heart to anyone in order to protect me from the deepest pain this loss had caused.

Once I had somewhat recovered from it, moved out of my parents and separated from my partner I began a phase of wildly exploring sex with as many people as I could commit to as possible. Not that I consider this polyamory anymore but back then I was only following an easy and maybe more model of casual sex as I wanted to be unbound and as free as I could. It was all about overcoming my Christian/sixophobic upbringing and getting affirmation and attention beyond that, using sex as an easy tool to prove that I am interested in being sexy.

Unfortunately I lacked all kinds of boundaries, so that I fucked over people frequently. Like when my neighbor heard me having sex the very night after I had sexed with him and he was very offended by that. It had not even crossed my mind that I should have in all fairness talked to him about what hanging out and sex meant to each of us. I did feel sorry about it, apologized and explained that I hadn't thought I had made any promises by making out with him. That was the headspace where I was.

When I was about 19 I became politically active and fell in love with M. this anarchist, pro-feminist guy. I got introduced to his lifestyle community in a former squat and there things were different from anything I had known so far. To me it literally smelled like freedom and eventually I moved in to learn how to question society's norms and be aware of their limitations in our very personal lives. Through this I got to know the meaning of open relationships and M. was happy to accept me wanting to have a non-monogamous relationship because he

was convinced that jealousy is a bourgeois claim of ownership over your partner and he would like to challenge that. W. had a quite ,DOD theoretical concept as he slid he wouldn't need to know who I kiss or get intimate with is lonl as it didn't affect or change my feelings for rum.

It all went well far both of us. He was not interested in casual sex himself and I looked after my own needs, mostly I kept it confidential as there wis no naed to gossip. This was also the time when I had my first crush on a woman and after a bit of flip-flopping we evantuilliy lot it on. I told M. about it because he knew hal' and all this wis so new iind exciting for me thlt I couldn't hold myself back and rully wanted to share it. He was very supportive and positive and once wa were .11 at the Sima concert he spoke to her and how they should be open about potentlll problem*.

I was stoked how finally I had found what I wanted. A primary partner I was In love with lind I could still act on my crushes, my flirt/sexual and ather needs. It felt very good to be so autonomous and still so close with someone.

When I wal loInl through a tough tim. during my apprenticeship and a deeply disturbing fight wrth my Cld, my needs changed. I felt I would not be able to handle M. havln. an affaire mainly because I was worried that I was too down or demandln. for emotional support that he could favour a new crush. So we closed the relationship to one side for a while (as I was seeing another woman It that time) until we realized how Imbalanced this wis and agreed IIIIn on whit we had before.

Sounds like the super perfect relationship for • queer poly person, aye? In the end we split up because I fell out of love with him, not because the openness of our relationship didn't work out. (He Is again in another open relationship now). I caused • big mess after we broke up because I started fucking another flatmate Ind for him, who was still In love with me that wis torture. I lost his trust Ind I deserved It . at the slme time I learned on. of the biggest lessons about open relationhlps. I began to communicate more, more honestly Ind first of all *h-time* Ind I trfcd hard not to let so selfish and ignorant anymore. rstili had to fall on my face a couple of times until I was able to take other peoples feelings seriously into ICCOUnt - b. respectful, considerate and talk to them about what could happen or what we would actually like to do together.

Now I let peopl. know, no matter what we .re up to in the end that I Im poly.morous. This Is the condition I start every relationship with end this is what I can and what I am willing to give or commit to. From there we Ire working and negotiating a way throu.h together, which is a different one with e.ch lover - of course.

At one point last veIr I was seeing four people simultaneously. Three of them lived in the same city and as the local queer scene is quite small we often ended

up at the same bars or parties all together. We would often arrange who would go (out and/or home) with whom that night so we could avoid chaos later on. We also had an agreement not to be too affectionate with the other lover in front of the rest - which I think applies to non-sexual/romantic friendships as well. Objectively it might look bewildering as each of us had also another lover but I think that prevented us from being in very unequal (emotional) situations.

I still do, get jealous sometimes - not so much about sex itself but about attention or when I feel someone is not caring about me much anymore. I have often negated and suppressed it because I didn't want to complicate things. I am still learning to determine and hopefully even accept my jealousy, so I will be able to communicate and eventually lift it instead of sulking.

With each of those women I had a connection. It was crushes, mutual interests and desires, soul touch, sexual adventures, dancing, wrestling the fragilities of life etc. I was very happy and thankful for engaging with and learning from every one of them. Change has irretrievably happened so that now we are no longer defined lovers anymore. Maybe it was partially because I pushed polyamory too far, and rather expanded it too much as I don't even have a place to live on my own (over here) and I would permanently leave town. But this was not the only reason. We have all been very busy with various stuff, other issues have influenced the way we interrelated to each other and eventually one had left the country. I have decided after this that, no matter how many beautiful and amazing people there are, I have no capacity for more than two committed lovers at the same time. I mean, I don't want to piss my friends off in the long run, or my lovers, or not spend any time with myself in my life.

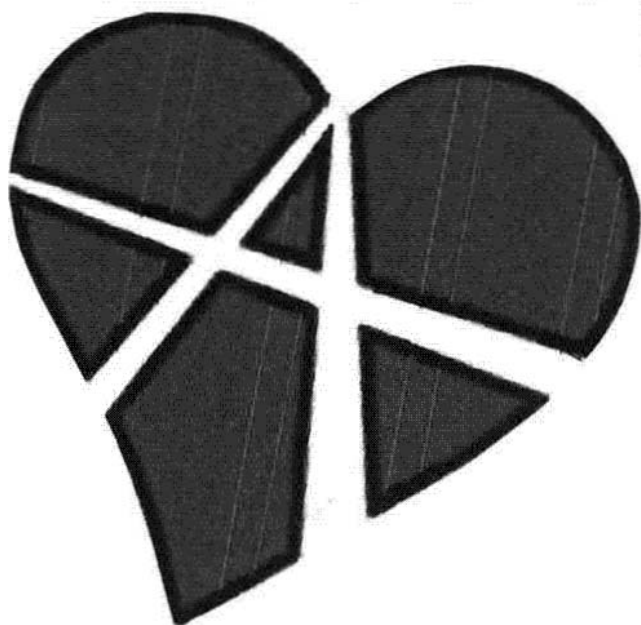
My primary partner is kind of cut off from my queer life as that is nothing he is very interested in or can relate to. He is also never in the places where I am with my queer folk. We're a little two-person unit, which is often not easy for me especially because we have no mutual friends. I think all my questions and poly-stuff is quite overwhelming for him in times because it is so new and foreign and I am the one who set those conditions to our relationship - the frame, not the love, as I feel like I am unable to actually love now.

Even though we are connected through other things we have to deal with my and his differing lifestyles and I am glad we have moved from total disregard to acknowledgment and acceptance. We are still working on how to actually talk openly about my polyamory or how to deal with jealousy or what kind of personal boundaries he has. We agreed that I would not make out with anyone he knows and be closeted neither out as queer or poly in his environment (and I doubt they would understand let alone approve), I am convinced this is the best solution for the time being.

I feel like as long as I'm queer (In my definition: loving all genders) there is no other way for me than being polyamorous – apart from that it is again and again a choice I make because I love it. How could I be sexual and intimate with women and men if I was not poly?

I often feel like I have to defend my way of loving to opposing people because either I want them to like me or to understand me or both. For me personally I have long accepted that this is who I am. I have fallen in love deeply and came very close with partners but my attraction to and curiosity for others has not disappeared and though I believe a lot of people feel like me, I too want to be 'bit to act on what I feel or the crush that is flowing between me and someone else. Although when I was young I thought there must be one person out there who will meet all my needs and make me happier than ever, I decided ages ago I would not even want to keep looking for this person. I feel like I am happierr " I can live what and where and how much I like, with everyone I have (romantic/sexual) feelings for on my side.

I would like to acknowledge that some people are happy in their romantic monogamous relationships (or when we are "single") and though I used to ...pride them dismissively, my opinion has changed. I would like to accept other people's choices more and I want them to accept mine. There are also 10 million ways of living our relationships, so that even a polyamorous one could be unhealthy and unhappy. What is more essential is to realize the ongoingness of relationships/friendships in general, how they constantly change, how we as individuals change and therefore our needs, desires and what we are truly searching for. I always want to be as self-conscious as possible and be aware of how much effort or feelings I put into a relationship so that I don't get lost or disappear out of my social network or forget about the dreams I have for myself.



Dear *****

I hope it's okay I write to you. I've had to check in, and say that I'm open to (and keen for) us communicating, in **whatever** way you're comfortable.

I really respect your relationship with **, and the commitment you have to each other. I don't ever want my actions to interfere with what you two have together, and will do my best to tread carefully and thoughtfully. Please also feel free to tell me if you have concerns or feel uncomfortable with things. I would be really happy to talk about and commit to boundaries that feel good for you.**

For me, non-monogamy has never stopped feeling new and quite scary. So I wonder about, and care about how it **all** feels for you, I hope you'd feel able to tell me if there is **stuff** you need from me.

I know we don't know each other very much, but if you ever feel like talking, hanging out or **whatever**, that would be nice...

With love, ****

To ****

It was really nice to receive your letter, thank you!

I've heard it from and I knew it was **sensible/ logical** for me to think you respected me and the relationship I have with *---, but it was so **relieving** to hear it **actually coming from you.**

Where I'm at. the moment is that when I'm feeling o.k and in control of myself I feel really good about your relationship with **. I think you're a lovely super cool person and I think if, exiting for you and**

It's **really hard** (or **me right now to process and deal with stuff when it becomes real** and not just in the **hypothetical sense.** NDI all the time though, sometimes I'm **ok.**

I'm **going to try my hardest to not let stuff freak me out too much, because I feel really affirmed in my choice to be polyamorous...**

I guess I just need you to know that for me **at the moment life is really difficult in general, I'm really depressed and sometimes not coping.**

What you said about treading carefully and thoughtfully would be a really good way for things to be approached for me.

I'd be **very** open to having a **coffee date** to talk about this **stuff** sometime...

There's more I'd like to talk about in person, but I find it really difficult to talk to people I don't know well, especially about stuff related to my mental health.

Yay! It **will also be cool** just to **hang/ talk** because **I hear you're pretty cool :)**

XX From - ***

NRE THE ULTIMATE APHRODISIAC

by Chris

Love is blind and new love is also deaf and dumb. Think about when you start falling in lust, and you don't see the words bad news written across the object of your desires forehead. You try to talk to them, but struck dumb the only words that come out are h...h... half form.... and when your best friend tells you you're lusting after a loser you chose not to hear. This is the crush, the first stage of new relationship energy or NRE.

NRE goes beyond the crush, it is a term used to describe an emotional state found in new love/lust. Wikipedia tells us '{NRE} is a state of mind experienced at the beginning of most significant sexual and romantic relationships, typically involving heightened emotional and SCXI1a1 receptivity and excitement.' Zhahai Stewart who coined the term has this to say '{it is} the heady rush of escalating emotional connection and the hot juiciness of a growing sexual attraction.'

Perhaps one of the most important considerations involving NRE is that our perception of our new lover is skewed. There fore, we, polyamorists run the risk of hurting our ongoing lover/s. For example if you are trying to tell an ongoing lover how great a new lover is, and the old lover knows what you are saying is not true, and is also wondering why s/he isn" getting an equal share of praise and attention, then you might be stepping on your old lovers toes.

The trick here is to acknowledge the NRE. First balance your opinions remember to take each other seriously. It OO_, help O say things like 'You"', only saying that because you have NRE' or 'you're only saying that because you're jealous'.

If you are experiencing NRE remember to spend time with your ongoing lover. and it is a good time to do some special things for them, to remind them that they are special to you. If you are in tune with your self and the love you have, you could try transferring some NRE to your ongoing lover. Never compare lovers to each other; this can be really cruel and potentially harmful.

If you are the ongoing lover without NRE then remember that NRE doesn't last for ever, and that your lover will eventually come back to earth and the joys of ongoing relationship energy. If you are open to all the possibilities of love then you are likely to benefit from your 10vers NRE. Being happier they might be more pleasant and being sexually charged they may be more sexual (although don't ... this to be the case). Also, with your lover otherwise occupied, you might find you have more time and energy to nurture yourself, get that job done or concentrate on other relationships.

One of the main benefits of being polyamorous is that you don't have to rely on one person for all your wants, needs and desires. If you're feeling neglected then why not go and ... another lover of yours. Of course this only works if you have another lover. I was in a steady loving relationship with one partner for a couple of years where I, only, had two short romances with other people, while she had two other ongoing lovers. I believe this kind of relationship *could* work, however I don't recommend it. She was 'spread too thin' and I was too concentrated on her, which created a negative imbalance.

If you are just beginning to explore polyamorous relationships then it is particularly important to be aware of and talk about NRE. This is because first times ... often difficult and NRE brings up further difficulties. Being aware of these complications and talking honestly openly and with good intentions can only help. As always, communicate, communicate, communicate.

NRE is defiantly not a bad thing; it is perhaps one of the greatest things in the world. Think of all the art devoted to new love or remember that NRE feeling of, I'm so sexy, bliss. Therefore NRE is obviously not something we should try and suppress in our lovers, no matter how jealous we ... of their emotional high. Conversely like any precious gift it is not something to be flaunted.

A word of warning: because NRE is short lived it has nothing to do with stability or security. If you are tempted to jump from one NRE high to the next, I am not going to say don't do it I will, however, say that polyamory is about ethical relationships built on honest open communication and fully informed consent. In my opinion these relationships are ... ier to have in relationships that go beyond the intoxication of NRE. As Stewart says 'NRE may well be the ultimate aphrodisiac. Be careful and enjoy.

I AM TOO OLD FOR MONOGAMY!



Queer