

Polyamory 101

Closed Marriage n : Marriages where there is no emotional intimacy or sexuality outside the marriage.

Closed Group Marriage n : A group of individuals who describe themselves as married but may or may not be all primaries and who are closed to outside sexual relationships 2: A marriage in which fidelity is not equated with monogamy
syn **polyfidelity**; see also **group marriage**

Closed Relationship n : An agreement among the members not to get sexually and/or romantically involved with anyone outside the relationship

Commitment n 1 : to pledge or promise to do something 2 : dedication to a long-term course of action 3 : engagement 4 : involvement 5 : to put into charge or trust 6 : ENTRUST 7 : to carry into action 8 : PERPETRATE 9 : TRANSFER, CONSIGN; committal n; commit vb; committed vb; committing vb

Compersion n : the feeling of taking joy in the joy that others you love share among themselves, especially taking joy in the knowledge that your beloveds are expressing their love for one another. The term was coined by the Keristan Commune in San Francisco which practiced Polyfidelity, Kerista disbanded in the early 1990's

Condom Commitment/Contract n : an agreement to confine exchange of bodily fluids and barrier-free intercourse to a closed group which has previously been screened for sexually transmitted diseases. syn. safe sex circle, fluid bonded

Family n, pl -lies 1 : a group of individuals living under one roof and under one head : HOUSEHOLD 2 : a group of persons of common ancestry : CLAN 3 : a group of things having common characteristics; esp : a group of related plants or animals ranking in biological classification above a genus and below an order 4 : a social unit usu. consisting of one or two parents and their children

Fidelity n, pl -ties 1 : the quality or state of being faithful 2 : ACCURACY
syn **allegiance, loyalty, devotion, fealty**

Group Marriage n : a marriage involving more than two people.

Group Relationship n : a committed, loving relationship involving multiple partners.

Hinge n or adj: Refers to Vee's, or similar dynamics in a more complex relationship, the "person in the middle", more bonded to each end than they are to each other, is sometimes called the hinge. Without the hinge, the others people often go their separate ways.
syn **pivot**

Intentional Family n : a relationship in which three or more partners consciously chose each other as family, partners may or may not live together, there is the potential for all family members to be sexual with each other if they mutually chose to do so but this is not a requirement for family membership, syn expanded family

Intimate n, vb or adj 1 : an intimate friend, associate, or confidant 2 : INTRINSIC; also : INNERMOST 3 : marked by very close association, contact, or familiarity 4 : marked by a warm friendship 5 : suggesting informal warmth or privacy 6 : of a very personal or private nature-mated; -mating 7 : ANNOUNCE, NOTIFY 8 : to communicate indirectly : HINT; intimation n; intimacy n; intimately adv

Intimate Network n : individuals who desire friendship and perhaps sex with their lover's and other friend's, forming a web of varying connections within a social circle

Intimate Partner n : a gender-free, orientation free term that define a person that another person is involved with their is a presumption of a romantic or sexual connection

Intimate Relationship n : a gender-free, orientation free relationship term that assumes romantic or sexual connection

Jealousy n or adj 1 : angry or hurtful feelings that a group or an individual can provoke in another group or individual, often resulting from fear of loss or replacement 2 : demanding complete devotion 3 : suspicious of a rival or of one believed to enjoy an advantage 4 : VIGILANT; jealously; jealous adj
ant **compersion**

Limerence n : The state of being IN love. A temporary state that usually lasts 6 months to 2 years, marked by intrusive thoughts and giddiness. Colors reality and not the best time to make major life decision.
see also **New Relationship Energy**

Monogamy n 1 : the practice of marrying only once 2 : being married to only one person at a time 3 : a marriage in which two partners agree not to have sex or erotic love with anyone else 4 : a lovestye for two players;
monogamist n; monogamous adj

POLY ACTIVIST FLEXICON

New Paradigm Relating n : a philosophy of relationship which emphasizes using the relationship to consciously enhance the psychological and spiritual development of the partners, New Paradigm Relating is characterized by responding authentically in the present moment, honoring individual autonomy, equality, total honesty and self responsibility.

New Relationship Energy (NRE) n or adj: energy that flows between partners in a “new” relationship, the excitement and discovery that occurs during this time as opposed to old relationship energy that is part of a more settled, stable, comfortable time in the relationship

Nonmonogamy n : a relationship which allows for more than one sexual relationship at a time

Old Paradigm Relating n or adj : a philosophy of relationship which emphasizes well defined rules, extensive agreements, ironclad conditions and the importance of the group over the individual, usually involves a hierarchical power structure.

Open Marriage n 1 : A marriage which includes a spouse bond and other lovers or romantic relationships depending on availability and circumstance. 2 : A marriage whose partners are in a consensual nonexclusive relationship.

Open Group Marriage n 1: A group of individuals who describe themselves as married, but may or may not be all primaries and who are open to outside sexual relationships

Open Relationship n : a relationship in which the partners decide that they can have sexual relations outside of the relationship. Partners have agreed that they can have sexual relations independently of each other.

Partner n 1 : Gender-free, heterosexual-assumption-free term for someone with whom one is romantically involved with 2: SPOUSE or SPICE 3: ASSOCIATE(S), COLLEAGUE(S) 4: two or more persons who dance together 5 : one who plays on the same team with another 6: one of two or more persons contractually associated as joint principals in a venture—partnership n

Plural Marriage n : a name often applied to Mormon-style polygyny, in which all the wives may live together or each may have her own home

Poly n or adj -Short for Polyamorous or polyamory

Polyactivist n : a person interested in taking action intended to counteract the political, social and religious enforcement of monogamy; Polyactivists help promote greater awareness of Polyamory as a legitimate relationship choice; polyactivism n

POLYLEXICON

Polyamorous or polyamory n 1 : practicing polyamory 2 : of or characterized by polyamory

Polyamory n : is the non-possessive, honest, responsible and ethical philosophy and practice of loving multiple people simultaneously. Polyamory emphasizes consciously choosing how many partners one wishes to be involved with rather than accepting social norms which dictate loving only one person at a time. Polyamory is from the root words Poly (meaning “many”) and Amour (meaning “love”); hence “many loves” or Polyamory

Polyandry n 1 : the state or practice of having two or more husbands at the same time 2 : the mating of one female animal with more than one male; polyandric adj; polyandrist n

Polyfriendly n 1 : an ally of people of a polyamorous or polyamory orientation 2 : amicable 3 : supporting, helping or favorable 4 : showing friendly feelings to polyamorous or polyamory people or unions 5 : ready to be a friends to polyamorous or polyamory people or unions

Polyfidelity n : a group in which all partners are primary to all other partners and sexual fidelity is to the group; shared intent of a lifelong run together. More primary partners can be added with everyone’s consent, or the group may not allow any “outside” partners at all. The term was coined by the Kerista commune

Polygamy n : the practice of having more than one wife or husband at one time; polygamist n; polygamous adj

Polygyny n 1 : the state or practice of having two or more wives at the same time 2 : the mating of a male animal with more than one female

Primary Relationship n 1 : the closest relationship type, the person(s) given the most time, energy and priority in a person’s life; includes high level of intimacy, attraction and commitment as demonstrated by marriage-level bonding (such as shared life paths, goals, parenting, economics, housing, important values, ongoing emotional support, etc.), typically includes a desire for a shared lifelong future together

Quad n : A multiple partnered relationship with four members

Relationship n : the state of being related or interrelated

Relationship Orientation n 1: The preference for sexual or romantic relationships which are monogamous, nonmonogamous, intimate network, Polyfidelitous, etc. 2: The design or structure of a sexual or love relationship. Like the term “lifestyle,” it implies a conscious choice. syn. Lovestyle

POLYLEXICON

Safe Sex n : ideal 100% safe sexual activity and especially sexual intercourse in which various measures (as the use of latex condoms) are taken to avoid diseases (as AIDS and other STD's) which are transmitted by sexual contact

Safer Sex n : reality, not 100% safe, sexual activity and sexual intercourse where various measures are taken such as the use of latex condoms and barriers to avoid sexually transmitted disease also taking into account that no such measure is 100% safe or foolproof

Secondary Relationship n : a close relationship type, by definition it is given less in terms of time, energy and priority in a person's life than any primary relationship, includes aspects of primary relating, such as sexuality and emotional support but usually involves fewer ongoing commitments as evidenced by fewer shared values, plans or financial/legal involvements, may include a desire for a long term future together

Serial Monogamy n : a succession of monogamous partners over time, overlapping sexuality only in the transition from the current monogamous partner to next

Sex Negative adj : a person with the belief that sexuality in general dirty or distasteful, including their own sexuality

Sex Positive adj : a person who is comfortable with own sexuality and sexuality in general

Spice n : Plural of **spouse**

Spouse n : a person's husband or wife

Swing Club n 1 : a meeting place where recreational sexual activity take place 2 : an organization that support, encourage and promotes recreational sexual activities

Swinging vb 1 : Recreational sexual activity, also called "sport sex" where partners or participants agree to have casual sex with each other. There is usually no emotional involvement. 2 : A form of relationship in which usually two primary partners agree to have casual sex with other couples or singles

Tantra n : 1 Hindu or Buddhist scriptures dealing with techniques and rituals including meditative and sexual practices 2 : TOUCH 3 : Yoga spiritual discipline 4 : SENSATION 5 : FEEL

Tertiary Relationship n or adj : a relationship which may include emotional support or sexuality on a one-time or highly erratic schedule, attention or energy is given in bursts but the relationship is not a consistent part of a person's life

POLY LEXICON

Triad n 1: any three-person romantic relationship. 2: three people involved in some way; most often used in a committed sense; in some cases involving ceremonies of commitment 3 : a union or group of three usually closely related persons or things 4 : a romantic relationship between three people, each of whom shares an intimate emotional and/or sexual bond with all the others

Vee n : three people, where the structure puts one person at the center, or “hinge” of the vee, also called the pivot point; in a vee, the arm partners are not as commonly close to each other as each is to the pivot

Veto n : Partners agree to an open relationship, but allow their primary partner to approve any new partners. If the primary partner does not approve of a new partner, then the new relationship will not continue.

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Guide to Possible Poly Configurations

Poly Singles: People who are not currently involved in any relationship, but believe in the concept of polyamory, and perhaps hope to incorporate it into any future relationships they may have.

Poly Couples: Committed couples that are open to having relationships outside of their own relationship. Some committed couples may choose to have relationships separately, or some may choose to both be involved in the same relationship. For example, they may choose to become involved with another couple, or if one partner is bisexual, they may both be involved with the same individual person.

Open Poly Groups/Marriage: A group of 3 or more people who are committed to one another in some way, and are also open to adding new partners to the relationship, either as a separate relationship between one partner and a new person, or as an addition to the group.

Closed Poly Groups/Marriage: A group of 3 or more people who are committed to one another in some way, therefore practicing non-monogamy, but have chosen not to add any new partners. This is commonly referred to as “polyfidelity”.

Expanded or Intentional Family: A relationship in which three or more partners consciously chose each other as family, partners may or may not live together, there is the potential for all family members to be sexual with each other if they mutually chose to do so but this is not a requirement for family membership.

Intimate Network: Individuals who desire friendship and perhaps sex with their lover’s and other friend’s, forming a web of varying connections within a social circle. They are informal webs of people with varying levels of interpersonal bonding and commitment who share a belief in open multilateral relationships. Intimate Networks often develop around or among open marriages or open couples. People in Intimate Networks and other Polyamorous or polyamory relationships sometimes refer to the depth of their relationships as “Primary,” “Secondary,” and “Tertiary” to describe the varying levels of commitment involved.

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Guide to Polyamory Resources

Books on Polyamory

The Ethical Slut: A Guide to Infinite Sexual Possibilities

by Dossie Easton and Catherine Lizst

Considered by many people to be one of the definitive guides to “responsible non-monogamy.” While it’s not technically about polyamory, but rather about “polysexuality” (ethical non-monogamy), it is still useful for anyone interested in polyamory. Published by Greenery Press.

Monogamy by Adam Phillips

Written by a psychologist, this book examines the traditional concept of marriage in a society where divorce is altogether common.

Polyamory: The New Love Without Limits: Secrets of Sustainable Intimate Relationships by Dr. Deborah M. Anapol

An excellent resource for polyamorous or polyamory people. Focuses more on polyfidelity than on other kinds of polyamory, but another all-around must-read.

Open Marriage: A New Life Style for Couples

by Nena O’Neill and George O’Neill

A book written in the early 1970s that explores ways to maintain individuality in relationship.

Lesbian Polyfidelity: A Pleasure Guide for all Women Whose Hearts are Open to Multiple Sexual Loves by Celeste West

A book whose focus is specifically on polyfidelity—non-monogamous closed relationships.

Note: Each of these books represents one potential way or set of ways to approach responsible non-monogamous relationships; none should be taken as the “official” or “right” way to conduct a polyamorous relationship.

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Online Polyamory Resources

PolyTampa

<http://www.polytampa.com>

Web site for PolyTampa, Tampa-based support group for polyamory

PolyCentral

<http://www.polycentralfl.com>

Web site for PolyCentral, Orlando-based discussion and social group for polyamory

BrevardPoly

<http://www.brevardpoly.com>

Discussion and social group for Florida's Space Coast.

Florida Polyamory Society

<http://floridapolyamory.4t.com/>

Tampa Polyamorous Folk

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/tampapolyamorousfolk>

South Florida Poly

<http://www.sfpoly.org>

Pensacola Polyamory

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pensacola_polyamory

Polyamory?

<http://www.xeromag.com/fvpoly.html>

Franklin's online primer for polyamory. Contains a beginner's guide to polyamory, resources for monogamous people in non-monogamous relationships, and references to Web and print resources

Polyamory Index

<http://www.sexuality.org/polyamor.html>

The polyamory section of ***sexuality.org***. Contains links to resources, writings, essays, and so on.

Loving More

<http://www.lovemore.com/>

Home page for Loving More, an organization which publishes Loving More magazine and sponsors annual conferences on the subject of polyamory.

The alt.Poly home page

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

Includes FAQ's, a Guide to Screwing Up a Poly Relationship (or, what mistakes NOT to make), and even a poly BBS.

Polyamory Society

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

News, information, discussion, and resources, particularly for people who aren't necessarily poly but know people who are.

Poly MatchMaker

<http://www.polymatchmaker.com/>

Personals page for polyamorous or polyamory people looking for new partners.

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Common Polyamory Myths

Like all subcultures the polyamorous or polyamory community has its share of myths—ideas that may be subscribed to by many people, but which aren't necessarily true. A few of these myths are dissected below.

Poly people are “more evolved,” or “more enlightened,” or “more advanced” than monogamous people

Poly people are different, that's all.

There are monogamous people who are enlightened, passionate, caring, compassionate, wise, and benevolent people. And there are poly people who are selfish, inconsiderate jerks.

People are people. You can be wise or you can be a jerk, regardless of your relationship model. Being polyamorous or polyamory does not automatically mean you're in possession of some secret wisdom or some special enlightenment.

Love is limitless

Love—at least, romantic love—is never limitless. It must always necessarily be bounded by time and energy and resources. There are six billion people on the planet, and it is simply impossible, for both emotional and practical reasons, to form meaningful relationships with all of them! For that matter, I've never met anyone who can manage sixty, or indeed even ten.

Love may be limitless in the abstract, but in the concrete world of work and conflicting schedules and finite resources, it's limited indeed. Put simply, there is a finite boundary on the number of people one can love, and spend time with, and a finite boundary on the emotional resources available to anybody.

Anyone can be poly, if they can just get past their social conditioning or their monogamous upbringing

This is quite probably true of a great many people, but it most assuredly is not true of everyone.

Not everyone is able to choose polyamory. Social conditioning aside, there are many people who seem to be naturally predisposed to monogamy, and a few who seem permanently wired for it, just as there are many people who seem permanently wired to be poly.

“Being poly” and “being monogamous” are not really binary. There is a continuum between people who are monogamous, and can’t be any other way; through people who can, under the right circumstances and with the right people, learn to be happy in monogamous or polyamorous or polyamory relationships; through people who are poly, and cannot be any other way.

Some poly folk seem to believe that monogamy is an accident of social conditioning, nothing more; everyone would, or could, be poly if it weren’t for a monogamous upbringing getting in the way. The reality is more complex than that.

Poly people don’t feel jealousy

Anybody can feel jealousy, under the right circumstances. Being polyamorous or polyamory does not make you immune to jealousy at all; poly folk are just as prone to it as those in traditional relationships.

Jealousy is merely a feeling; of and by itself, it’s neither good nor bad. Jealousy is almost always a symptom of an underlying insecurity; the most effective way to handle jealousy is often to solve the underlying problem that creates it.

Anyone, polyamorous or polyamory or not, can experience doubt, insecurity, and jealousy. People in successful polyamorous or polyamory relationships often do not feel jealous in the same situations that might make people who are accustomed to traditional relationship models feel jealous, that’s all.

Many polyamorous or polyamory people will claim that they never experience jealousy. This may be true, but it’s not related to being polyamorous or polyamory; rather, it’s more related to being secure in yourself and in your relationships. Monogamous people can be secure, and polyamorous or polyamory people can be insecure; everyone has their own circumstances that may trigger insecurity.

A good goal in any relationship, polyamorous or polyamory or not, is to strive to create a set of mechanisms for dealing with insecurity and jealousy. One technique for doing this is to recognize the roots of the

feeling; another is to confront the feeling head-on, rather than attempting to dismiss it as “irrational” or “unjustified.” Feelings are irrational by their very nature; jealousy is no exception. Dealing with it directly and openly, and acknowledging it for what it is, is often an excellent first step in isolating and addressing the problem underlying it.

Poly people are more honest

Honesty is often considered the cornerstone to a successful polyamorous or polyamory relationship. I’d take it one step further than that, though; honesty is the key to any successful relationship, polyamorous or polyamory or not!

The consequences for dishonest behavior in any relationship can be devastating. Polyamorous or polyamory relationships are no different from monogamous relationships in that regard. Polyamorous or polyamory people quite often make a conscious effort to be open and honest in their relationships, but they are by no means unique, and being polyamorous or polyamory of and by itself does not automatically make someone honest. Just as there are monogamous people who are open, ethical, and honest, there are also poly people who are deceptive, unethical, and dishonest.

The same values that make for successful polyamorous or polyamory relationships--honesty, integrity, compassion, respect, trust, love, understanding, good communication and conflict resolution skills--also make for successful monogamous relationships. Polyamorous or polyamory people don’t automatically possess these skills, any more than monogamous people automatically lack them; and, like human beings everywhere, polyamorous or polyamory people so not always live up to their own ideals.

Polyamory is a new idea

Polyamory as a social movement is relatively new, but polyamory as a practice has been around for a very long time indeed, even though the word “polyamory” has not. Conscious, ethical, deliberate non-monogamy is hardly a modern ideal; it’s been around for as long as we have been civilized animals.

Polyamorous people are more spiritual than monogamous people

This rather peculiar myth is quite widespread in certain segments of the poly community, but there’s not a word of truth to it.

Polyamorous people engage in multiple simultaneous relationships; monogamous people engage in romantic relationships with one person at a time. A person may be spiritually enlightened or not regardless of

the number of partners he or she has. Having more than one partner does not make you spiritual, and having one partner does not make you unenlightened.

Spirituality and enlightenment are completely unrelated to your relationship model. Some of the most spiritual people I have ever met are monogamous, and some of the least spiritual are polyamorous. Polyamorous people, like monogamous people, come in all flavors, philosophies, and beliefs.

Polyamory is a cure for cheating

There is a profound difference between the mindset of a monogamous cheater and the mindset of someone who is polyamorous. A poly person is not generally driven by the same motivations as a monogamous cheater; people do not cheat because they are “really” poly but don’t know it.

Most often, attempting to “fix” a relationship in which one person is cheating by making that relationship polyamorous is not going to work. For starters, a person who can’t be trusted to behave with compassion and respect toward one person can’t be trusted to behave with compassion and respect toward more than one; and on top of that, imposing a large-scale, far-reaching shift in expectations on a relationship that already has problems is likely to increase the stress on that relationship. Polyamory is best ventured into when your relationships and your relationship skills are already quite strong.

A monogamous cheater is not the same as a polyamorous person in a monogamous relationship. Cheating does not imply a polyamorous mindset or philosophy. It's the reasons that the monogamous cheater is cheating which are important.

That is not to say that it’s impossible for people who have cheated to transition to ethical polyamory. Sometimes, a person who is polyamorous by nature or inclination may cheat because he or she may not be aware that another choice is possible, or may not be aware that alternatives to monogamy exist. In such a case, it may be possible for the person who has cheated to adapt to an ethical framework of polyamory, once he or she becomes aware that the option exists; however, if a person in this position succeeds in keeping the partner he or she cheated on, it’s likely because that partner is extraordinarily patient!

Polyamory is all about paganism or new-age spirituality

There is no direct connection between the practice of polyamory and the practice of paganism, new-age spiritual beliefs, or any other philosophical, religious, or spiritual system.

Some people associate polyamory with the practice of new-age religious beliefs, but the fact is, not everyone who is a pagan or new-age spiritualist is polyamorous, and not everyone who is polyamorous is a pagan or new-age spiritualist.

Many people who are prominent in the polyamorous community, such as author Deborah Anapol, also espouse a new-age set of beliefs. However, there is no direct link between these beliefs and polyamory, and not everyone who is polyamorous subscribes to such beliefs.

Poly people are kinky

Polyamory is a relationship style, not a sexual practice. There's no relationship between polyamory and weird, kinky sex; many people who are kinky are monogamous, and many people who are not monogamous prefer only unconventional sex. Being polyamorous does not even necessarily imply group sex! A person who has more than one sexual partner does not necessarily have sex with all of them at the same time...