

POLYAMORY

Questions You May Have

WHAT EXACTLY IS POLYAMORY?

It's a good question. Basically, *poly* is a Greek word meaning many, and *amor* is a Latin word meaning love. Thus, polyamory means many loves. However, in practice, polyamory (sometimes referred to as poly) is often defined as consensual non-monogamy, which means open, honest, transparent agreement among partners to love more than one.

Other lifestyle choices and relationship agreements like swinging, polygamy and open relationships may or may not overlap with polyamory.

WHO IS POLY?

While it is a matter of controversy, some people believe that they are hard-wired or born polyamorous, and for others, it is seen as a lifestyle choice.

Polyamory may be a practice, a lifestyle, an identity or an orientation.

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HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM POLY?

If you find yourself wanting more than one relationship at a time, you might be poly or non-monogamous. For some people, it is clear from their inner experiences and earliest memories that they want or are most fulfilled loving more than one person. For others, the path to identifying as polyamorous is discovered over time as they become aware of their preferences and needs in relationships.

Challenges of poly relationships include:

- jealousy and use of shared resources (time, money, sex, energy, attention, space, etc...)
- marginalization, disclosure to others and social obstacles
- internalized oppression, identity and coming out issues
- power dynamics within poly relationships
- agreements and contracts within poly relationships

Potential gifts of poly relationships include:

- an abundance of intimacy, self-expression
- intensified communication and skillful relating
- opportunities for personal growth, self-knowledge and reflection
- a larger family constellation – more love, resources and diversity
- a deep appreciation for the wisdom, strength, and courage that each partner discovers while navigating uncharted waters

WHAT CAN I EXPECT IF I COME OUT AS POLYAMOROUS?

Sharing your polyamorous identity or relationship is a very personal and individual decision. Who and when you tell may depend on your feelings of safety and trust in the person(s) you are speaking to as well as other factors.

You may find acceptance or be challenged by friends' and family reactions. You may find that others have little or no knowledge or awareness of what polyamory is. They may be confused or assume it is the same as swinging, having affairs, polygamy or other lifestyles.

WHAT IF MY PARTNER IS POLY AND I AM NOT?

Proceed with caution! Polyamory is challenging and requires partners be willing to work hard on themselves, intimacy and relationship issues as well as finding a way to be in the world as polyamorous. When one or more partners do not identify as poly, special attention and care must be given to all to include and honor differences if the relationships are to thrive. Often, community networks, support groups and professional assistance are useful when processing strong tensions and change.



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WHO IS A POLY-FRIENDLY THERAPIST?

A poly-friendly therapist:

- provides a safe place where polyamorous clients can explore the unique difficulties they face in meaningful ways
- explores their own personal ideas, feelings, thoughts, beliefs and attitudes with regard to polyamorous and monogamous biases and choices
- develops and uses “meta skills,” or feeling attitudes, of open-mindedness, curiosity, acceptance, compassion, exploration and celebration of diversity
- realizes that people who identify as polyamorous, or who are in polyamorous relationships, may be judged, stigmatized or pathologized by society, family, friends, co-workers, professionals, public institutions and their community
- seeks and applies knowledge of the unique issues of polyamorous clients and requests consultation or supervision when needed

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFO?

LifeWorks clinicians have many years of experience working with diverse relationship constellations, issues and conflicts. If you are seeking support to find more fulfillment and acceptance for yourself and/or your relationship, we can help.

Whether you identify as monogamous or polyamorous, exploring an unconventional relationship, or are married, living together or living apart – we all long for respect, support and encouragement.

When attempting to live in a non-mainstream relationship, you may face special difficulties and challenges that sometimes complicate or aggravate your personal life. We recognize that as we endeavor to live in any relationship, we often need more support and help than our culture and extended social networks may provide.

www.lifeworkspsychotherapy.com/what-we-do

www.psychotherapyevanston.com

WHERE CAN I CONNECT WITH OTHERS EXPLORING POLYAMORY?

A monthly Polyamory Support Group meets on **Saturdays, 10:30 -12:30,** **at The Center on Halsted in Chicago,** facilitated by Rami Henrich, LCSW and Cindy Trawinski, Psy.D.

There are also a number of social events hosted by members of the polyamory community in the Chicago area. You can find out more about the support group and other events at www.meetup.com/Chicago-Polyamory

LifeWorks Psychotherapy Center offers individual, relationship and group psychotherapy as well as seminars and classes open to the public.

Lifeworks can help you gain clarity, self-understanding and compassion for yourself, so you can experience joy, change old patterns and discover new perspectives.

We can help you reconnect to your deepest values and inner strengths to become the person you want to be. We can help you enhance your connections and find new ways of relating to yourself and others.



Rami Henrich, LCSW

I believe you already have what you need inside of yourself to have a meaningful life, to solve and resolve problems, to be joyful and content. As a therapist, my job is to help you access a deep sense of knowing your own source of creativity and your true nature. I see myself as a facilitator of inner and outer relationship processes.



Cindy Trawinski, Psy.D.

I believe psychotherapy is one way to learn, to grow and to bring more awareness to our day-to-day lives. The whole of life can be an adventure full of experimentation and learning with the right attitudes and skills.



Pat Cochran, Psy.D.

When you engage with your struggles, it may lead to a shift in attitude, even though nothing on the outside may change. Engagement is at the root of all lasting or profound psychological change. I undertake a journey with my clients towards an openness and receptivity to the very things they would rather move away from, and instead go deeper into them and perhaps develop a new capacity to live within their struggles, seeing them in an entirely new way.

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