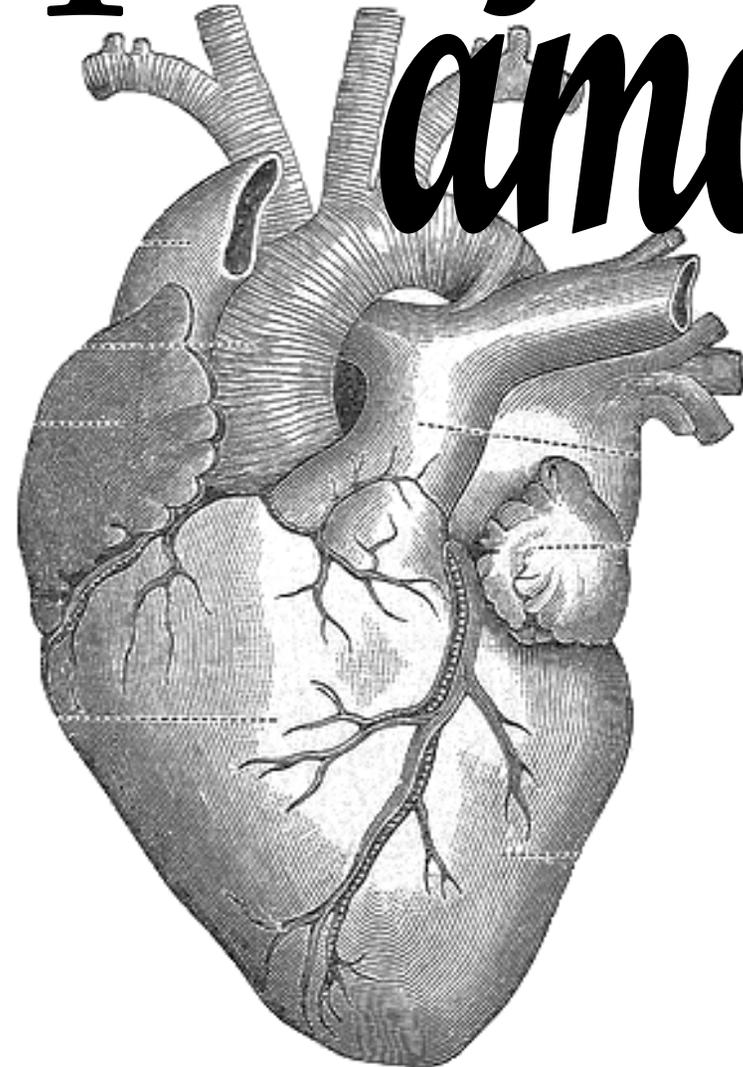


# poly *amor*



Anti-©opyright

An exploration and expression  
of polyamorous relationships



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to everyone who supported the creation of this zine. This would not have been possible without the interest, inspiration, and input from so many folks.

First, thank you to Erin Murphy and Hannah Martinez for sparking the fire for this zine.

Thank you to Kelly Kelbel, my wonderful supervisor, for the support in creating this zine. Thank you to the RISE Crew Members of 2010 for your support as well!

Thank you to Jenny Gay for the contribution on Jealousy, as it really added to the quality of one of the most important sections in this zine.

A big thank you to my roommate and dear friend, Liz Bender, for all of your input and listening to me read the zine sections to you at night before bed.



## RIGHTS OF PARTNERS

*I have the right to:*

- ♥ Have my boundaries, limits, and values respected
- ♥ Tell my partner when I need affection
- ♥ Refuse sex anytime for any reason
- ♥ Have friends and space aside from my partner
- ♥ Say “I want to know you better before I become involved.”
- ♥ Say “I don’t want to be in this relationship any longer.”
- ♥ Change my goals/mind whenever I want
- ♥ Disagree with my date
- ♥ Leave any situation my instincts tell me to
- ♥ Have my needs be as important as my partner’s needs
- ♥ Trust myself above all others
- ♥ Not to be physically, emotionally, or sexually abused
- ♥ Not to take responsibility for my partner’s behavior
- ♥ Break up and fall out of love with someone and not be threatened

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTNERS

*I have the responsibility to:*

- ♥ Determine my boundaries, limits, and values
- ♥ Respect and not violate the boundaries and limits of others
- ♥ Communicate clearly and honestly
- ♥ Ask for help when I need it
- ♥ Be considerate
- ♥ Check my actions and decisions to determine if they are good or bad for me
- ♥ Set high goals for myself in dating relationships
- ♥ To support my partner emotionally
- ♥ To allow my partner to maintain their individuality



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## RESOURCES

### Books:

The Ethical Slut by Dossie Easton and Jeanet W. Hardy

Redefining Our Relationships by Wendy-O Matik

Polyamory: The New Love Without Limits by Dr. Deborah Anapol

Stranger in a Strange Land by Robert Heinlein

### Websites:

The Polyamory Society (.org)

Polyamory.org

### Other Helpful Zines:

*Consent* by Philly Stands Up

Do You Ever Want to Know About Healthy Relationships?"

by the RISE Project

### RISE Contact:

Email: [rise@warren-wilson.edu](mailto:rise@warren-wilson.edu)

Website: <http://www.warren-wilson.edu/~rise/>

Our office is in the Dodge House.

Many of the pictures in this zine were taken from the book titled

"I Like You" by Sandol Stoddard Warburg with illustrations by

Jacqueline Chwast. Check it out.

I'll read it to you sometime.

Dear Reader,

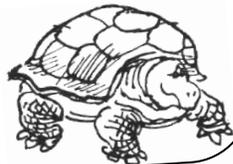
*Poly Amor* is an exploratory zine on Polyamory and polydynamic relationships. It covers ground between language and defining Polyamory, while exploring the possibilities of polydynamic relationships and the qualities of healthy relationships in general.

This zine does not discuss marriage or family set ups that use types of Polyamory, because these are somewhat outside the scope of what occurs at Warren Wilson. There are Warren Wilson students who are married, get married, or get engaged during their time here. However, polyamorous situations are far more common. By excluding terms such as polygamy, we want to be clear that we are not excluding ideas of how culture plays a role in determining a person's desires or the social acceptance of those desires. Conversations of religions or cultures that support or encourage polyamorous relationships are far more complicated than this zine can manage to discuss. Issues of legality also complicate these matters, because laws vary from country to country regarding marriage, sexuality, and gender, which are all very relevant to romantic, intimate, and sexual relationships. If you are interested in polygamy the Internet is a great resource.

With no further ado, here is *Poly Amor*. Hope you enjoy what it has to offer and are perhaps inspired.

Best Wishes,

Lil' Bear and the RISE Project



## HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP TOOLS

The topics discussed in this zine can be formatted and applied to any healthy relationship. Even if Polyamory is not the mode of relationships being thought about, it certainly employs ideals of communication, unlearning jealousy, and consent that every healthy relationship and/or sexual activity would ideally embody. Let's review some of the healthy relationship tools that this zine discussed in regards to Polyamory, but are also applicable to any form of relationship.

### Bill of Rights:

Within every relationship, each individual has the right to express their needs, make their own decisions, say "no", feel safe, and be respected. The Bill of Rights is on page 19 of this zine.

### Communication:

To communicate with a partner means to share feelings and thoughts, pay attention to the partner and their thoughts/feelings, express interest in what the other person is saying, and try to understand how the other person is feeling. There are more tools to healthy communication in the zine "Do You Ever Want to Know About Healthy Relationships?" by the RISE Project.

### Consent:

In a recent advocacy training, the participants were asked, "When two people come to a decision together and consent is reached, what are some feelings that you have?" I immediately knew what to say and became extremely excited, so I raised my hand and energetically exclaimed, "I love it!" Consent is an empowering and often awkward agreement to make. It is important to know our own needs before we can reach a consensual agreement. More info on consent is on page 20.

*Poly*—Greek word meaning several  
*Amor*—Latin word meaning love

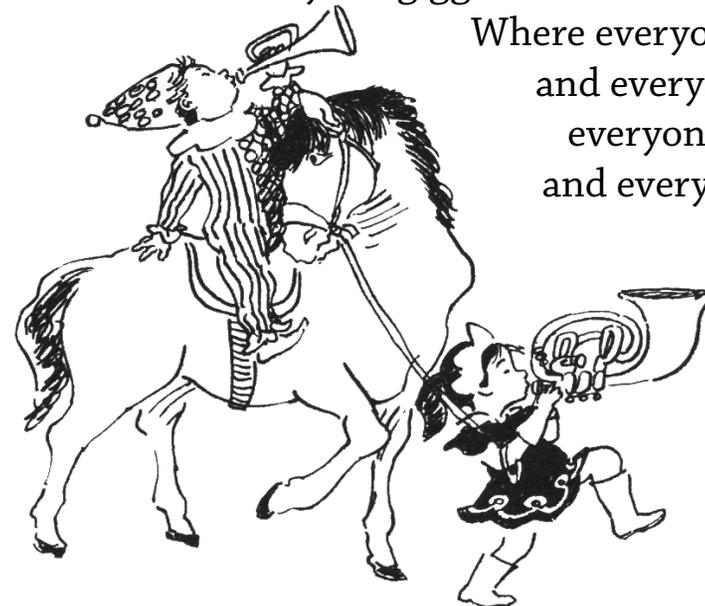


## Hug O' War

By Shel Silverstein

I will not play Tug O' War,  
I'd rather play Hug O' War;  
Where everyone hugs, instead of tugs,  
And everyone giggles and rolls on the rug.

Where everyone kisses,  
and everyone grins;  
everyone cuddles,  
and everyone wins.



# LANGUAGE

Polyamory: having more than one intimate relationship at a time with the consent of everyone involved. Polyamory can include open-relationships or committed polyamorous partners. Not all polyamorous relationships are defined as committed or open

Monogamy: having only one intimate relationship at a time

Partner: an individual who you share a relationship with

Co-partner: an individual who you share a partner with

Consent: an agreement that people must make if they want to have physical and/or sexual contact. The issue of consent can be complicated and ambiguous. Read more about Consent on page 20

Boundaries/Rules: articulated and clearly communicated guidelines of a relationship that partners make for personal and shared benefit, comfort, and safety. Learn more about boundaries on pages 22-23

Cheating: breaking boundaries set within a relationship and defying respect of partners

Polyfidelity: a practice of group commitment in which all members consent to only be sexually active with other members of the group

Safe Sex Circle: an agreement to confine bodily fluid exchange and barrier-free intercourse to a closed group of individuals that have all been screened for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) and received screening results, prior to the agreement

Open-Relationship: To some folks this means a relationship in which partners are free to experience physical and emotional relationships with other people, often with mutually agreed boundaries and with consent. To others an open-relationship means that individuals can do whatever they want with who ever they want without regards to other people.

I was inspired to keep talking to folks to further the subject matter in this zine in hopes that the information would reach more than the individuals who are already interested in and/or practicing Polyamory. I am inspired by the possibility of this zine inspiring folks to redefine their understanding of a healthy relationship and considering the possibility of Polyamory in their lives.

I was amazed by how strongly some social norms influence our lives. The norm of committed monogamy, as the only real form of relationship and thus the only true form of love, is widely accepted and is questioned as rarely as other social norms. I find that many people are persuaded by and not challenging the norms of our society or questioning the realistic application of these norms on their lives in relation to their personal beliefs and needs. Challenging, or even questioning, the norms of our society can be a tricky process and certainly a journey for learning.

We must explore our needs and beliefs, as individuals and as partners, before understanding if Polyamory can work for us as individuals. This is also a process that can be difficult. In any learning process it is important to stay healthy and keep our own needs in mind, since these questioning and redefinition processes can be emotionally draining and exhausting. A first step to questioning this love-norm: Would we choose monogamy if it was not socially expected of us, if Polyamory was more widely accepted and celebrated?

With this said, I simply want to encourage folks to think about the roles of love and the various forms that relationships can take. Explore personal beliefs and brainstorm the process of redefining relationships. Good luck.

and remember,  
you can do anything good!



## A FREE WRITE

When I began writing this zine, I decided to talk to friends and peers about their ideas and feelings surrounding Polyamory. Sometimes folks asked me to define Polyamory, while others needed no definition, until I understood their belief of Polyamory to include marriage or a similar long-term commitment. After introducing the idea of Polyamory to these folks, I was surprised by the conversations that were sparked surrounding jealousy and general healthy relationships. I found that many individuals believed jealousy to be the ultimate barrier to the possibility of polyamorous relationships in their lives, while others feared that their love would be spread too thin among multiple partners. Many folks felt unable to love with as much intention, in a polyamorous relationship, as they believed they could while practicing monogamy.

These conversations sparked interest, inspiration, and many ideas that contributed to the sections of this zine. I am grateful for all of those folks who felt comfortable talking to me about their thoughts, emotions, and experiences.

I was interested by the vast array of topics that folks brought up after I introduced the subject matter. Many conversations surrounded ideas of jealousy, how to own one's emotions as their own, and general logistics of relationships being difficult to communicate at times. I spoke with a couple people about understanding our own needs before communicating them to partners and the ways in which we communicate our needs to continue sustaining a healthy relationship. These conversations sparked ideas for the zine, but also helped me think about my own needs and my ability to communicate to partners. I am interested to see how this zine affects readers' beliefs of Polyamory and of healthy relationships. The impact of a social norm on such a personal experience as love continues to interest me.

## SLANGUAGE

Here are some terms that were created within poly-networks. Some of these can be quite fun to use and others are helpful in navigating through a polyamorous relationship.

Polydynamic: relationships and interactions that hold polyamorous characteristics and values.

Polyglamoury: the glamorous experiences concurrent with polydynamic relationships. This is a light-hearted term for the exciting experiences that one would have while in a polyamorous relationship. An example might be a dance party or an STI testing party with partners, copartners, sweethearts, and friends.

Posiamory: positive feelings and excitement experienced through polydynamic relationships

Compersion: a non-sexual state of happiness experienced when one's partner expresses happiness about an outside source, possibly a new romantic interest or a great adventure experience

Lovestyle: a conscious choice of the design of a sexual/intimate relationship, similar to lifestyle; how an individual identifies in their love life or how an individual chooses to embody their personal role as a partner



## MYTHS →

There are commonly believed myths, which are defined as unfounded and false notions, surrounding many aspects of our society, especially when it comes to ideas and practices that challenge the societal norms. Here are just a few common myths that are held about polydynamic communities and polyamorous relationships. These are stated in no particular order of significance or prevalence.

1. Polyamory does not include commitment and therefore is not really love.
2. Having sexual/romantic feelings toward anyone but your partner (in monogamy) means that you are not really in love with that partner.
3. Jealousy is inevitable and impossible to control when experiencing emotional and physical involvement with multiple people within the same time and space.
4. Polyamorous relationships are just about open sex and open involvement.
5. Cheating is acceptable in polyamorous relationships.
6. Loving someone makes it okay to control their behavior.
7. Long term monogamous relationships are the only real type of relationship.

## BOUNDARIES TO THINK ABOUT

- ♥ Who everyone is sexually involved with
- ♥ When folks in a poly-relationship are getting tested
- ♥ Which partners want to know details about your involvement with another person (with that person's consent) and which partners simply want to know when and with whom you are sexually active. Some partners might not want to know the details and would rather just be informed of your involvement with other people.
- ♥ Establish a plan for regular check-ins to discuss how each other has been feeling and if boundaries need to be reevaluated or redefined.
- ♥ Establish a plan if a partner is upset/stressed and how they prefer to interact during those periods of time. Example: Some folks need time to themselves when stressed out, while others might want to hang out with friends and partners to relax.



Every relationship has varying boundaries. These are just things to think about that might help keep the relationship within communicable lines and within comfort levels, while meeting the needs of those involved.

## SETTING BOUNDARIES

Setting boundaries in polydynamic relationships looks different within every relationship. Despite this, many folks choose to set boundaries around similar aspects of the relationship and for similar reasons. When setting boundaries, be honest about your ideas and listen to those of your partner(s). You might set one set of boundaries for a relationship with one person and another set of boundaries for a relationship with another individual. This may be a great idea if the boundaries differ with your primary and secondary partners or if the boundaries differ with folks within a closed sex-circle. Keep in mind the feelings that you have experienced in certain relationship situations, why you might have felt that way, and if a boundary of some sort might assuage the arousal of such a situation again.

Here are some exercises that might be useful in creating healthy relationship boundaries:

- ♥ Create a list including times that you have felt ignored or your boundaries have been violated. Example: Being introduced to new people can push the sensitivity button for some folks and for many reasons. Some folks might only be comfortable in some settings to be introduced as a partner of someone or that might be how they want to be introduced all the time.
- ♥ Create a list of behaviors that will help you develop and build healthy boundaries. Examples: talking, reflection time, unlearning jealousy, and developing good communication skills.
- ♥ Be clear with your partner about your needs. Practice expressing your needs to friends and partners, then devising a plan of how to establish boundaries that fulfill those needs.

## REALITIES

Challenging myths of any form is an important step of the process toward understanding. Polyamory myths are easy to challenge with examples of healthy and consensual polydynamic relationships, which this zine can begin to inspire and attempt to provide.

1. Polyamory can and does involve commitment, between partners, primary partners, and spouses. In any relationship we hold commitments of honesty, consent, and care. Each polydynamic relationship is different and the levels of commitment vary, but surely are not absent.
2. Having sexual/romantic feelings toward anyone but your partner means that you have feelings for another person. This is okay. What is important to remember is to discuss these feelings with your partner, to keep them informed, and to listen to their needs and concerns.
3. Jealousy may feel inevitable for some people, however, it is manageable and, through practice, it can be easy to control. Check out the jealousy sections in this zine, on pages 8-11, to learn more.
4. Polyamorous relationships are still about consent and keeping in communication with people who are intimate with one another even though they are open.
5. Cheating is a disrespectful disregard for boundaries made within any relationship, including polyamorous relationships. Cheating, by definition is not appropriate in any relationship.
6. Loving someone does not make it okay to control their behavior. Everyone has the right to make their own decisions without the imposition of anyone else.
7. Everyone chooses to model their relationships differently and sometimes these models do not include monogamy. It is all a matter of personal comfort and choice with the individuals in that particular relationship.

## A PIECE ON JEALOUSY

I used to think that jealousy had to be a part of any romantic relationship I had. I thought this because I had never been without someone who hadn't betrayed my trust. In return, I started to treat people I was in romantic relationships with the same way. Somehow I thought if I tricked those people and decided to be with more than one person at a time it would fix all the broken parts inside of myself. I was wrong and I hurt others and in return they hurt me. Eventually the same thing happened in all of my romantic relationships and my jealousy drove everyone away. The incessant calling, and asking, "Where are you?" "What are you doing?" every single time I was away from a romantic partner. I became angry, frustrated, hopeless, and depressed. I felt like I would never be able to foster a healthy relationship because I was damaged and crazy.

I started a relationship with someone a little over a year ago and this vicious cycle started to take effect once again. I was terrified I would lose this wonderful partner that I loved so deeply. I knew if I didn't change and work on my jealousy issues this relationship would crash and burn just like the others. I read the book, Redefining Our Relationships, by Wendy-O Matik, and it changed my entire view about how to approach issues of jealousy in my romantic relationships. The book discussed jealousy in open relationships, which I wasn't interested in, but it also applied to my monogamous relationship with my new partner. I had to learn to manage, communicate and understand my jealousy in order to improve my romantic relationship with my partner. This took bravery and a lot of trust in my new partner.

## CONSENT MEANS...

You are never entitled

Communicating

Expressing feelings of crushes and flirting with someone before you are drunk

Knowing your own boundaries and asserting them

Asking "is it okay" or "do you like this?"

Asking if they want to be touched, and if yes, asking how

Stop in the middle of whatever you are doing if they say so.

Reading someone's body language and if they don't seem into it, stop. Then ask or check-in.

Being Responsible

Not punishing them because they won't have sex with you

Many different things to different people

Enjoying yourself and your partner

More than can be defined on a piece of paper



WHAT DOES CONSENT MEAN TO YOU?

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# CONSENT

When/If consent has been established:

- ♥ All partners need to be fully conscious and aware. Alcohol and various substances interfere with someone's ability to make clear decisions, including the level of intimacy they are comfortable with.
- ♥ All partners are equally free to act, have the options to choose to be intimate or not, and should be free to change "yes" to "no" at any time.
- ♥ All partners clearly communicate their willingness and permission. Consent is not the absence of the word "No" or the absence of resistance.
- ♥ All partners are positive and sincere in their desires. It is important to be honest in communicating feelings about consent. If desires are stated, informed decisions about the encounter can be made.



Through open communication, honesty, and a lot of love, I'm still with my partner today and am as happy as a clam.

Jealousy can eat up all your good parts if you don't tend to it when you need to. Being honest with yourself is the first step in dealing with your jealousy. In the process of dealing with jealousy you have to make sure to love yourself as much as possible and get support if you need it. To everyone that has ever experienced jealousy and in result has been called a crazy, I promise there is hope for you too.

Cheers to healthy and happy relationships!  
Jenny Gay



# JEALOUSY

Jealousy, as we often feel it, is a combination of multiple emotions. It is a mix of sadness, frustration, exclusion, insecurity, anxiety, fear, and a multitude others emotions—all of which many of us have felt in relationships, intimate or not. It is common to feel all of these, though it is also possible to overcome these negative feelings through owning emotions as our own and by communicating our needs to partners and friends. Through discussing Polyamory with friends, I have encountered many people who are not interested in Polyamory because they are not interested in feeling any of these emotions or having to deal with them. If you are one of these folks, hopefully this zine will give you some insight to managing these emotions and allow you to begin thinking about the ideas, no matter your relationship status.

To own our emotions, we must first acknowledge the components of jealousy that we feel. In situations where we feel excluded or ignored it is important to express these feelings to our partner and to verbalize our needs. These needs might include one-on-one time with that partner, time to ourselves, or time with that partner as well as a co-partner. Suggesting to spend time with partners and co-partners is also a great way to prevent feelings of exclusion and to spend time with multiple people who are important to one another.

In polydynamic relationships, every individual has the right and need to spend time with their respective partners. One should allow a partner time with a co-partner, as the time will come when they will ask for time with that partner by that co-partner.

Remember folks, sharing is caring!

# BILL OF RIGHTS

I have the right to...

- ♥ Consent ♥
- ♥ Love and be loved ♥
- ♥ Express my feelings without being criticized ♥
- ♥ Be treated with respect ♥
- ♥ Ask questions and be heard ♥
- ♥ Say “no” and not feel guilty ♥
- ♥ Make mistakes ♥
- ♥ Not be perfect ♥
- ♥ Not be liked by everyone ♥
- ♥ Not be abused ♥
- ♥ Change my mind ♥
- ♥ Protest if I am treated unfairly ♥
- ♥ Stand up for others and myself ♥
- ♥ Take time for myself ♥
- ♥ Feel safe ♥
- ♥ Be me ♥



## RESPECTING IDENTITIES

*Why? Because we love them!*

In polydynamic relationships, it is important to respect the identities of your partners. This seems like an obvious statement, but within polydynamic relationships it is incredibly powerful to acknowledge the individuals for who they are and what they mean to the polydynamic unit and to the community as a whole.

I think a lot about supporting partners and am constantly evaluating my responsibilities to do so. Asking partners how we can validate them in their identities and be by their side with a supportive presence. In relationships with an individual who expresses different identities than we do, there can be a lot to learn from these partners as well as a lot to talk about so that we feel well equipped to support them in any way that they might need us.

In relationships with trans-identified or gender queer folks, there is a space for support surrounding their gender-identity and being proud of who they are as an individual and as a partner. Talking with trans-identifying partners about comfort within public, private, and intimate settings is a great way to hear them out and find ways to support them.

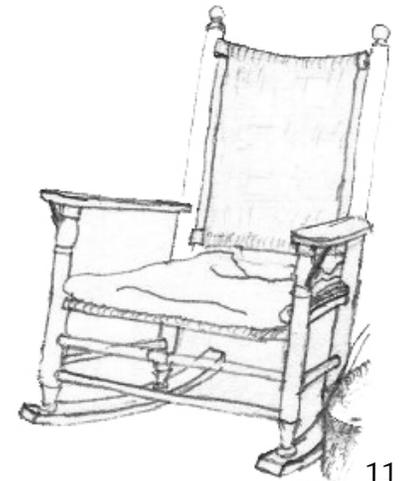
Communication is key to supporting partners in their identities especially during intimacy. There is a wide-spread feeling of discomfort about sexual activities and our bodies,. Through continuing consistent communication and active listening, we can begin to understand when we, as well as our partners, feel these discomforts and begin remodeling our relationships to fit the needs of everyone involved.

## UNLEARNING JEALOUSY

Jealousy is often related to a sense of entitlement. Since we do not own our partners, as we do not own anyone, there should be no sense of entitlement in relationships other than that of our own rights as individuals. We share the lives of our partners along with their emotions, experiences, and rights. A duty of a partner is to allow the other person to live their life and share of it what they will with us. It is also a duty of a partner to respect the rights of all individuals involved in a relationship.

To begin unlearning jealousy, starting small is a great step. Start small by relying less on other people and acknowledging the good things you accomplish in your life. Rather than finding friends and partners to reward you for an accomplishment, take yourself on a date, pat yourself on the back, or climb yourself a tree. We can learn a lot by distancing ourselves from reliance on other people.

Folks often attempt to quantify love by making statements that quantify love. This can be incredibly adorable and creative, but this quantifying aspect can turn into thoughts of jealousy—for example, when an individual believes that a partner's feelings and actions directly reflect how much their partners love them. The actions and feelings of individuals do not reflect how much they care about us, but rather reflect how that individual is feeling and responding to their feelings. We cannot begin to quantify such an unlimited resource as love. Petroleum ain't got nothin' on the sustainability of love! There is a lot of love in all of us to share. Perhaps we can learn to manage our resource of love and learn to share the time and affection that we choose to share.



## TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS

Sub-Relationships: distinguish between "primary" and "secondary" relationships—more info on page 16

Triad: Three people romantically involved. (Commonly initiated by an established couple jointly dating a third person; however, there are many possible configurations.)



Quad: Relationships between a couple and another couple or four individual partners



Polygamy (Polygyny and Polyandry): one person marries several spouses (who may or may not be married or have romantic relationships with, one another).

Group Relationships/Group Marriage: all individuals consider themselves associated to one another. These groups can be open or closed to other relationships outside of the group of individuals.



Mono/Poly Relationships: where one partner is monogamous but agrees to the other having outside relationships.

## SAFE SEX

Being sexually active with more people increases the risks of transmitting and contracting Sexually Transmitted Infections, so it is important to always use protection, (condoms, dental dams, cling wrap, etc.) when engaging in sexual activities.

Communication and agreements between partners and co-partners about who everyone is sexually active with and when everyone is getting tested is important to keeping everyone healthy.

Within a network of polyamorous folks, there might be more individuals who will want to get tested regularly. You can make a party out of going to get tested for STIs!

### **For Free**

Buncombe County Health Department

35 Woodfin Street

(828) 250-5109

Mon-Fri 8:00am-5:00pm

### **For a Fee**

Warren Wilson Campus Health Center

(828) 771-2053

Mon-Fri 9:00am-12:00pm, 1:00pm-5:00pm

Planned Parenthood

603 Biltmore Avenue

(828) 252-7928

Mon & Thur 10:00am-7:00pm

Tue, Wed & Fri 9:00am-5:00pm

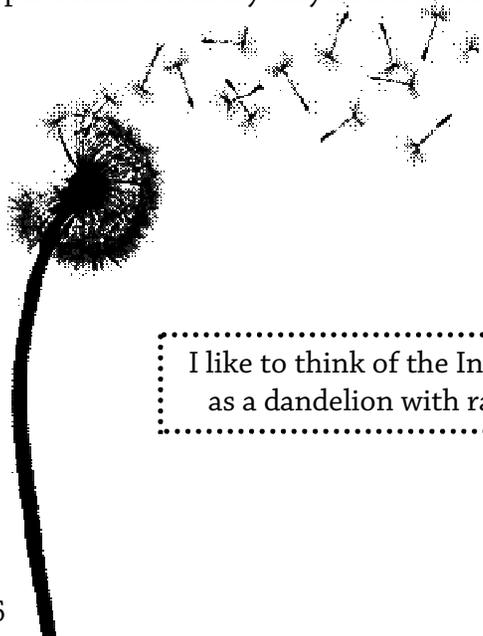
Sat 10:00am-2:00pm



## HIERARCHY OF RELATIONSHIPS

The terms primary relationships and secondary relationships are often used to indicate a hierarchy of various Relationships, or the position of each relationship in a person's life. Thus, a person with a spouse and another partner might refer to the spouse as their "primary" partner. (Of course, this is in addition to any other term of endearment). Primary could represent the closest relationship type the person(s) given the most time, energy, and priority in a person's life.

Some polyamorous people use this as an explicit hierarchy of relationships, while others consider it insulting to the people involved and believe that a person's partners should be considered equally important, even if the relationships with them are less tight. Another model sometimes referred to as an Intimate Network sometimes structures relationship hierarchies with fluidity, vagueness, or not at all. This model includes relationships that are of varying significance to the people involved, but are not explicitly labeled as "primary" or "secondary." Within this model, a particular hierarchy may be fluid and vague, or nonexistent.

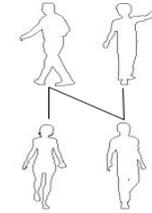


I like to think of the Intimate Network as a dandelion with radiating seeds.

## TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS

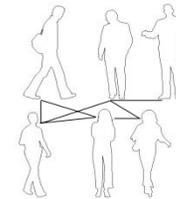
### Geometric Arrangements:

described by the number of people involved and their relationship connections to one another. Examples include "triads" and "quads", along with "V" and "N" geometries. A triad could be either a V or a triangle.



### Networks of Interconnecting Relationships:

where a particular person may have relationships of varying degrees of importance with various people.



The expression open relationship denotes a relationship in which participants may have sexual connections with others. When a married couple makes such an agreement, it may be termed an 'open marriage'. Some forms of polyamorous relationship are not "open" (e.g. Polyfidelity). And some open relationships may be open only sexually, while being emotionally exclusive. However, there is broad overlap between open relationships and Polyamory.



“Love is the ultimate outlaw. It just won't adhere to any rules. The most any of us can do is to sign on as its accomplice. Instead of vowing to honor and obey, maybe we should swear to aid and abet. That would mean that security is out of the question. The words "make" and "stay" become inappropriate. My love for you has no strings attached. I love you for free.”

-Tom Robbins

