

Could Your Open or Poly Relationship Use Some Help?

Perhaps you're here because you need help with an existing poly relationship. Whether your couple, threesome, or moresome is brand new or has been in place for years, you may be experiencing communication problems or other conflicts. It may be that you're wondering how to handle jealousy in an open relationship, or you may need help ensuring that everyone's needs are met—including your own. Time management of multiple connections can be difficult.

On the other hand, maybe you are considering a new open or polyamorous relationship. Perhaps you're single and looking for advice on polyamorous dating. Or, if you're currently in a marriage or other monogamous relationship, you may be wondering how to bring in one or more new partners while keeping your primary relationship strong.

You may also be wondering how to handle the expectations and judgments of friends and family who don't accept your relationship orientation or your polycule. If you have chosen not to share your relationship details with others, you might fear the repercussions of opening up. You might also be facing logistical challenges (who should come to family holidays?).

If your partner(s) and you have been open with others about your relationship orientation, you may have been subjected to harsh judgments or a lack of understanding. Fortunately, as a polyamory-friendly therapist, I can understand the unique challenges presented by poly relationships.

Open Relationships Are Difficult In Our Closed-Minded, Monogamy-Centric Society

With few exceptions, American culture posits that monogamy is the only valid structure for a relationship—it is assumed that one partner is all that should be needed to satisfy our every need; from companionship, love, sex, to child-rearing. Underlying this cultural expectation is also the idea that sexuality somehow needs to be reserved for just one person—and for life.

While monogamy works well for many people, it isn't ideal for everyone. For those who would like to experience friendship, love, and sex with more than one person, monogamy is overly limiting and can leave one or both partners with unmet needs, leading to things like depression, frustration, resentment, and in too many cases, infidelity.

Contrary to popular belief, open, poly, and other uncommon relationship structures aren't fundamentally "wrong," nor are they inherently problematic. With poly counseling, it is possible to build healthy, consensual bonds between multiple people that respect the needs and values of everyone involved.

How Poly Counseling Can Help

Strong communication is fundamental to any relationship, including poly and open partnerships, and in my experience, the more people you add, the better your communication needs to be. If communication between/among you has broken down, I can help you repair it.

Conflict is painful, so many of us avoid it. But this avoidance drives many communication problems. If you've been communicating through an intermediary partner, or perhaps not communicating at all, there is no way for your partner to know what you truly want or need. The assumptions they may make to fill this informational void can exacerbate the problem. The founding father of family therapy, Murray Bowen, called this type of interaction "triangulation." It is much better to avoid triangles and go directly to the source. . .

To help you overcome communication barriers like these, I'll teach you how to get your message across in the least hurtful and most productive way possible. Following well-established, psychological and communication principles from "nonviolent communication," I'll show you how to use "I" statements and true feeling words that help you express yourself without placing blame. I'll also teach you active listening skills to help your partner(s) experience being heard.

Before you can share your emotions/feelings, though, you will first need to define them. Betrayal, for example, isn't an emotion. It is an experience that happens to people and it triggers emotions. For example, your partner's relationship with another person might create the experience of being betrayed, but in my view, it doesn't result in "feeling betrayed." Most people would immediately become defensive when hearing that their partner "feels betrayed," and end up saying, "But I didn't betray you."

The event of being betrayed has underlying feelings like anger, pain, or jealousy which need to be examined. And sharing the deeper underlying emotion can help reduce defensiveness in the other person, so I strongly advocate for it. And even jealousy can be further dissected, according to Franklin Veaux in *More Than Two: A practical guide to ethical polyamory*:

"Almost always, jealousy is rooted in some sort of fear: of abandonment, of being replaced, of losing the attention of someone you love, of being alone," Veaux says.

As uncomfortable as jealousy can become, though, Veaux also notes, it isn't fatal. I can teach you how to overcome jealousy in an open relationship by helping you to better understand your partner's and your feelings so you can develop greater understanding, confidence, and trust.

I can also teach you the do's and don'ts of establishing open relationship rules. If you are in a monogamous relationship and you both want to open up your relationship, for example, I might encourage you to establish open marriage rules long before you take on any new partners. Every relationship will operate differently, and the rules that your partner(s) and you set will likely evolve over time. I won't try to influence your relationship structure one way or the other, but I can help you avoid common pitfalls.

To accelerate your progress, I may also recommend websites and books for your reference. I'll also apply what I've learned from other poly relationship specialists and colleagues in our poly counseling sessions. For example, I might use author Kathy Labriola's concepts of intrusion, demotion, and displacement to help you normalize and define your experiences and emotions.

As you consider poly counseling, you may be wondering. . .

Is this individual counseling? How many partners should/can I bring?

I welcome relationships of all orientations and sizes, so you can plan to bring as many of your partners to our sessions as you would like. If, on the other hand, you want to focus on a specific one-to-one relationship—perhaps between you and your primary or paramour—that’s fine, too. I’m also happy to talk to individuals, whether they are already open/poly or just curious. If you’re not sure who to bring, please [contact me](#) with a few details of your situation and I can make an initial recommendation. You might consider sending me a diagram of your personal polycule.

Will you judge me or pressure me to change my relationship model or values?

I will never influence you do something that doesn’t feel right for you. I know from experience what it’s like to be marginalized and bullied, so I’m honored to provide a safe, judgment-free environment where you and your partner can experience being understood and establish the kind of relationship you want—free from pressure and influence. It’s very difficult to offend me, and after working with such a beautifully diverse set of people throughout my career, I’m not easily surprised. As a polyamory-friendly therapist, I’ve pretty much seen it all.

Does poly counseling really work?

You never know if therapy will work for you and your partner(s) until you try it, but I have seen many clients discover how to lead healthier, happier lives thanks to their decision to get polyamory-friendly therapy. For example, one person I worked with recently had a powerful realization about what they really wanted out of relationships after I helped them to explore their feelings and analyze their past experiences. This realization gave them the courage to try a new relationship model that is now much more fulfilling for them.

Let Me Help You Build An Ethical And Fulfilling Poly Or Open Relationship

Regardless of your current situation, relationship goals, or relationship orientation, I can help you make sense of where you are now and help you get to where you want to go. As a poly-friendly therapist with more than 30 years’ experience, I’ve seen, first-hand, the positive impact that professional counseling can have. Feel free to visit my [contact page](#) to set up an initial appointment and determine if we would be a good team.

Courtesy of:



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