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Just getting some admin stuff. Okay, now I've got the chat function available. So anyway, hi, hope you're all having a great day. Welcome. And yeah, this is like I just mentioned, I'm going to be featuring live chats, I think a bit more often, like maybe every four to five weeks TBD. I've got some great plans, have some new projects that are going to launch and with that will come a much more consistent schedule of the lives so you'll know what to expect, you'll know when you can see me. I appreciate when other creators do that. So I was like, "Wait, why am I not doing that?" Okay, so I have some questions here that were emailed to me, feel free to drop any questions in the chat as we go, and I will prioritize whoever shows up. I'll prioritize your questions first.

So, first question. **"I'm trying to find the difference between being honest and oversharing. A lot of times I want to add detail, but people say it's too much, or I don't want to upset them. And then they're mad I didn't tell them more. It seems like everyone's line is different. What are some ways you can figure this out?"**

Common question, common question. What is honesty? What is oversharing? What is transparency? What is too much information? So I have a few questions that I keep in mind. I've covered this in a few other resources, if you want to look through my Patreon and see, other texts that I've written on, but I'll try and go over it essentially, here are things that I keep in mind, not comprehensive, but could be a place to start if you're like, "I don't even know, how do you even find it?"

So, first, who is the audience? Who are you talking to? And that can offer a few clues of relevance. Does your comet, who lives on the other side of the world, is it relevant for them to know who you just slept with? is that information that matters in their day to day life, that affects them, that they have asked to know? But also roles. Like, if I want to hook up with somebody who I know is friends with a partner, Their role as a friend, I want to factor that in. this is relevant on a few levels, not just as my partner but as the friend of someone that I'm interested in. So, Who are we talking to? because that can then shed some light on what matters. it will be very context dependent, it will possibly fluctuate with those same people over time, it's something you can keep checking in on, but don't get overwhelmed. Because once we actually start sitting in thinking about it and talking about it, some of it you might intuit a bit more than you think.

So, yeah, I think about roles, I think about relevance. Power dynamics, as well. If, let's say this person that I wanted to hook up with, if they're brand new to nonmonogamy,

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if they've never done it, and they're interested, and they seem cool, but there's still that power dynamic of, I'm doing this for 12 years. I need to factor that in. I risk acting like I'm the expert, or of them defaulting to me even if I tell them "no, please seek out your own support", to have them looking to me for guidance. And that can happen a lot, especially the longer that you're practicing non monogamy, the more you might be put into a role of more authority, even if you're not asking for it. Even if you're like, "take me off this pedestal, otherwise I'll fall off it", which is what I say all the time. It's something to consider.

So when we're delivering information, considering those asymmetries of power, who's more vulnerable, right? Is somebody really hypersensitive to something? And so it's going to be information we're going to want to handle with a bit more care? I would disclose something to someone who's brand new, a bit more gently, a bit more thoughtfully, maybe with a lot more conversation around how they would want to know it. I would do that more carefully than I might someone else who's doing it for a decade. And then it's a bit more of a streamlined conversation. "Hey, when do you want to know? okay, cool". people who are doing some form of nonmonogamy longer, there can be a comfort level of already knowing yourself, already knowing what you want to know, already knowing what is too much information. So it's hardest in the beginning, when you're still kind of figuring out what your vulnerabilities are. So yeah, relevance, roles...

And I want to think about, so the information that we're sharing: is it my information to share? Right? So, for example, I was taking an Instagram story this week in a hospital, and I had my mask on and I was just, frankly, kind of surprised and a bit annoyed at how nobody in the hospital was wearing a mask. even elderly people. And it's like COVID-19 is still rampaging on and on. So I was posting an Instagram story, and I was wearing a mask, and I was commenting on that. But I was in a medical place, I'm in a hospital, people are gonna see that and jump to conclusions, they're going to ask me, "Are you okay?" I could create an unintended false narrative of an emergency for me. The reality was, I was there supporting a friend to get a procedure, they're fine, I'm fine. It was just kind of a routine thing. And so I had this thought of like, "well, what is my business to share?" Because it's not my procedure. Do I reveal the type of friend and how they, how I know them? Do I give them even more elaborate descriptors? Do I use a gendered pronoun so that people would be able to put the pieces together? You know what I mean? there's this sense of, "I want to be protective of information that is not mine to share, of who they are and what they're getting." What is my information to share is where I am and why I'm there. I'm there in a support role, just as an example. So finding that line of what is my experience? And can I use protective measures of other people until it's been otherwise clarified, until I would be able to ask that person like, "Hey, do you care if the internet knows that you're in the hospital for this thing?" Because going back to

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power dynamics, I would be in a position to like, expose their private information to a lot of people. And that's power that we want to use carefully. So asking, what is it that you're saying?

Anyone who's just joining the chat, we're talking about how to find the difference between honesty and oversharing. So yeah, another question I consider is like, what is my motive for saying it or not saying it? Is it self protection? I don't use my full name online, for example. – I don't know why I'm going to online examples. I think that's where I'm most careful these days around communication. – But I don't use my full name, I withhold that from most people for self protective reasons, I don't know, I don't know who's out there. And that doesn't hurt anybody to do so. my motive for omission is self protection. But in the example I provided before, my motive for strategic vagueness and omission about my friend and their situation, that is for their protection, that is to make sure that they are in control of their private information and how it gets shared and to whom.

Sometimes we can say, “well, it's for my partner's protection, that I'm not telling them something. I don't want to hurt them”. Right? “I don't want to make them mad”. Um, so this is where it gets tricky. If whoever asked this, if you relate, that is something that we don't want to decide for somebody, we don't want to assume, “well, you got upset, therefore, you don't want to know that. So I'm omitting it next time”. We don't figure that alone in our heads, right? Can that be a conversation that we include the person and say, “what do you want to know? When do you want to know it? how do you want to know it? how is it helpful to hear it?”

The existence of somebody being upset with information is not the same as harming them. So this idea of, “I don't wanna hurt them, So I'm not going to tell them how much I love this person”. That's just an example. If they find out another way, that would be way more hurtful. there's so many, even well intentioned, omissions, or minimizations, that then blow up and wind up being way more hurtful down the road. And I do nudge people to ask, is any part of this also that you don't want to face the backlash? You don't want them to be mad at you or associate pain with you? Because that's very real. And that's both understandable and not a reason to – avoiding our own discomfort or avoiding conflict is not a reason to – put someone in a position to be hurt, to be harmed.

So yeah, that's basically rule of thumb, I don't figure that out alone in my head. I might even say, “Hey, it's really hard to tell you stuff”, or “hey, I'm really scared of like, I don't want you to cry at this information. What do? can we collaborate on that? Because I don't want to withhold stuff that's important. And also, it's hard to tell you stuff sometimes”. that's fair, I usually go that route if they are not making it very easy to be transparent. So those are some questions.

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I think there's some other things to consider, like I mentioned, what have they said they want to know? what have they said they don't want to know? And also why? so I don't know if you saw my superstore video, I think it was last week that I shared, media analysis of the TV show superstore and how they have these tight rules. one of which being, the third person – there's an open relationship – the person who's now hooking up with one of them, he needs to report in the group text chain when he arrives and when exactly they're having sex, and when exactly they stop having sex, right? That's a lot. That's a lot.

Then I ask “why?” because on its face, communicating about sex happening, or even when you'll be unavailable, when you'll be offline, “hey, don't call or text tonight, we might be intimate. That would be weird if you're interrupting”. That can be a conversation. It's just, where's the line? When does it start to feel weird? Like, “that's fine to ask, that's okay to ask, that is starting to feel like surveillance or starting to feel controlled. I'm feeling tight at that proposal”. so we can notice our own reaction to the specificity of the request. So then comes a question: why do you want to know that? And in that show, they wanted that sort of militant specificity and like, constant check ins, in an attempt to quote unquote “do it right”, in an attempt to be communicative. But if we're just enforcing something, and we're just thinking, “this is the law of the land, this is how it's going to be, we're doing things quote unquote, ‘correctly’.” If we're ignoring how it feels in the moment, and if there's any tension or if there's any feeling that it's a bit off, then yeah, we might be overriding some very important feedback that our body's trying to give us. And can there be other ways to still achieve that, to still achieve communicating that sex is happening, communicating when someone will be offline, without it feeling like a third party is involved in it or controlling it or? Or that you're answering to them? You know?

So I don't know, it's kind of a hard question to answer. What's too much information? we do consider the timing, we do consider the medium like, “do you want to know in person? you want to know in text? Do you want to know before I have sex, after I have sex?” And also I like to give people – especially if they're more vulnerable, if they're feeling more sensitive, or it's a topic that they're more stressed about – I like to give them the ability to decide what time of day they're hearing about it. like, “hey, I want to update you on this person that I'm dating. When's a good time? when would you like to engage with that information? And today, how much are you wanting to know? And in what detail? Do you just want to know that a date is happening, period? Or are you feeling softer about where we're going for dinner and hearing a little bit more color in describing my experience, for example? Or is it just like purely clinical because it feels very tight? So a lot of check ins, and a lot of kind of deferring to the more vulnerable person in the room, Of how we can take care of them. While not agreeing to something that feels unreasonable if it feels

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unreasonable. Can we ask why? So yeah, motivations, asking why, I guess that could be a headline thought here.

Okay. Welcome to everyone who's here. Thanks for joining, feel free to drop questions or thoughts or anything that's on your mind in the chat box.

Next question. **“I get really scared of what I don't know yet. My brain totally spirals with 1000 Terrible things that could happen. I'm always planning for a crisis and can't sleep. And I'm exhausting myself.”** I've been there. **“I know, it's mostly my own doing. How do I stop?”**

Yeah, I get it. You're not alone. That is very common, especially during such a major change. Like if you are newer in non monogamy, or if you're shifting your non monogamous structure, going through a big breakup, going through a big international move, having a child... anything that you've never done before. And the more significant and the higher the stakes, the more pins and needles we can feel, the more on alert. And our brain is like looking for evidence that we're in danger, right? It's trying to protect us, but it can kind of go in hyperdrive. And like this person saying, kind of overdo it to the point of exhaustion, and maybe not being productive.

Um, so yeah, so I like to ask, is there actually any evidence of a crisis? Because maybe there is, maybe there is a crisis. And your gut is correct. I don't I don't want to fan the flames of obsession. But I also don't want to ignore like, if you are picking up on some tangible thing, just like, if your boss has been giving you warnings of, you're not doing a great job, or if your landlord has sent you a threatening letter, or if your partner is acting suspiciously similar to how they acted when they cheated on you, do you have things you can point to that you're like, “No, that is definitely suspicious”, or “that is definitely, from learned experience, a sign of a threat”? Can we inquire further? Can we like, look into that? And can we not solve it alone in distress? I think even if there is very clear feedback that what's happening is maybe an indication of, “I'm not okay, or I won't be safe.” I don't want to solve that alone. because a distressed mind is not always coming up with the best solutions. It might come up with fast, urgent solutions, but that doesn't mean that it's the one you're gonna be glad you did.

But yeah, if there is no evidence at all, you're like, “No, they've given me no reason”, then I tend to think that there might be some past trauma. These are not mutually exclusive either, right? Like you could have past trauma and have a very good reason of why not to trust this situation. But if you definitely don't see any reason why this is rooted in present day reality, then can we ask about the past and what ghosts from the past might be haunting this moment and making me feel on edge. I'd say, in my experience, I've been the most on edge when I was the most safe, actually, because I didn't trust it. I was in emergency mode from childhood, and constantly putting out

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fires. And it almost felt more familiar, I'm not gonna say comfortable but more familiar. if I do have evidence of a crisis, I know what to do. I'm snapping into motion. I feel this muscle memory. But when it's quiet, when is the other shoe gonna drop? And so it's been years of really starting to internalize that quiet does not mean danger. And so, yeah, the lack of evidence can sometimes make it worse, depending on what your background is, in which case, who do you feel safe with? who do you have in your life that's got a track record of having your back, of being invested in your stability and your safety that you can rely on? then can bounce ideas off of that, you can ask like, "my brains telling me this, What's your take?" because again, we don't want to be alone with our heads in those moments, it can spiral and not take us anywhere helpful.

But sometimes it's ambiguous. So if I'm thinking of, "is there evidence? Is there not evidence of a threat?" Sometimes, it's a question mark, and that can also be hard. I had a partner that had a lot of medical symptoms once. And I was like, "This is really weird. These are weird things that are happening to you, and I had a family member that had the same symptoms. And so maybe you have their kind of cancer." that's just where my brain went. And, it is rooted in experience of, "I've seen this before, oh, my god", and, just like I'm not gonna go on WebMD and start looking up symptoms, because all roads of a paranoid mind can lead to cancer. In that case, I did not want to solidify and stick with the narrative and start believing the narrative that this worst case scenario is going to happen, until a medical professional got to weigh in. But even still, we planned the doctor's appointment – This was awhile ago – we planned that doctor's appointment. And the whole time I was like, "I'm not gonna say anything, but I'm definitely figuring out plan B, C, D E, of if you are sick, if you do have this cancer, okay, so how am I going to take care of you? How does this affect my work schedule? How is this going to...?" and all of that spinning of the wheels, it was so much wasted energy. Because we went to the doctor, turns out, [they're] fine. Turns out they have an upset stomach, and here's why and maybe stop eating these foods, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. So that ambiguous evidence can be dangerous because it's like, "Well, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, I know what this is". But how much of it is us projecting onto an unclear or incomplete picture? projecting onto it what our worst fears are just by taking a couple of small bits, right? So can we seek out more information? Can we notice that this is an unclear picture, This is incomplete? Can we pursue more information and ask more questions? Because we do want clarity. Yeah, and in that case, it can often become a matter of learning to tolerate discomfort, learning to tolerate the unknown, a bit more. Which, the better you get at it, the more it's a superpower because there's so many unknowns.

Okay, next question. We've got one in the chat. **"My lover and I struggle with codependency mostly because we're obsessed with each other, almost kind of cute. So not the worst problem. But it means that we're trying and failing to**

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make time for ourselves, our work and our other relationships including romantic ones and kind of failing. I'm worried that over time this will lead to resentment or a feeling of being stuck or out of control."

Okay, so codependency, I have my experience in addressing it and in "recovering" from it is through Al Anon through Codependents Anonymous, through different kinds of like detaching from addicts. so I am not as clear of, I don't know if what you're in is codependent, only really a professional who hears your entire story would probably be able to shed light on you with that. Because sometimes if you're intertwined, sometimes interdependent, sometimes spending a lot of time together or like your schedules are really meshed or your life becomes more a mesh, is that quote unquote, "unhealthy"? I don't know. Right? It sounds like if you're concerned about resentment, feeling stuck, feeling out of control. And I'd be curious if there are any signs of that already. what is making you worry about that? Or is it reminding you of a past situation? That's like, I was just saying, like, "Hey, this is starting to – pattern recognition – I'm starting to notice something similar. How do we avoid repeating history?" So asking those questions of like, "what is making me ask this? What is this maybe reminding me of?" that can then give some more information of what you're hoping to avoid. And anything that you already know about yourself. Like, what makes you feel autonomous? What makes you feel strong? What makes you feel connected to your friends, your family? Other anchor points outside of this romantic or sensual relationship? How can those be reinforced? So that it doesn't feel like all of the stability eggs are in one basket. You know?

Yeah, I think just continuing to have touch points outside of the relationship is kind of our grounding, and remember, "okay, I am not this connection, my internal world does not depend on, does not need to go up and down with, how this connection goes." Now, if it is really hard to do that, I don't know if you have access to some professional support, because that could be a bit above my paygrade, if I'm being real. I don't know if it is a new relationship energy, sometimes that rides its own course, has its own trajectory, and then it starts to stabilize. But if you're trying and failing to make time for yourself, can that be probed for some more information as well? why? is it uncomfortable to be alone? Is it feeling like a withdrawal, even? like, sometimes if we're getting really high on a person, we don't like the feeling of withdrawal, we don't like the feeling of quiet or having mundane chores or obligations that aren't as fun. can that just be asked without judgment? Just inquiring, "what is it that I might be avoiding, if anything? running away from, if anything?"

Otherwise, I don't demonize feeling obsessed with a person and spending a lot of time with them. It just, it sounds like there's a part of you that's weary of what is on the other side of this. In which case, can you consider what roadblocks might be

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getting in the way? Often, it's a matter of like, "what am I avoiding or running away from?" not to demonize avoidance but yeah, we don't want to set ourselves up to crash. to leave things, other relationships and other commitments neglected, to the point that it all falls in on us at some point.

So I don't know if that's helpful. If it's like, just, can there be more inquiry? Yeah. as to what's standing in your way, And then who do you trust to reach out to, to take you to task for that? like, "hey, I want to go to the gym this week, can I reach out to my friend to check in on me? Can you remind me to do that?" for example, or whatever your alone time is, like "I'm setting Friday to be my alone time, who can check in on me and remind me about that?" I don't know what your support system looks like. But sometimes without help, it is too much for us. my hope would be that your partner would also be supportive of you. Continuing to foster your own autonomy and vice versa as well. How we get sustainability, that's how. we are in this for the long run, right? It's not a sprint. It's a marathon.

Okay. Next question. – Oh, that does not have enough lemon. I made lemonade and it's not lemony enough, just water.

Okay, next question. **“What would you suggest when polyamory makes a lot of sense cognitively, mentally, spiritually and even emotionally but not yet on a somatic level, lots of nervous system activation, how to make sure the body is on board in unlearning relationship structures? How to bridge the potential gap between cognitive understanding and consciousness, and somatic or physical reality?”**

That is the work. if we're like, "are you doing the work of finding sustainable nonmonogamy?" that is it. right? and so, this is – so many people enter nonmonogamy being like "this makes sense. So I'm gonna do it", not really anticipating how much their body feels unsafe because they've never done this before. How much old insecurities, very old traumas or old feelings about attachment figures and stuff, how that can just get rustled up and feel like "oh, no, my safety is at risk". That is I think the primary concern for most early nonmonogamous people, or again, people going through a significant change. If we have never had experience being safe in a situation, we will not yet feel safe in that situation. You can't talk yourself into feeling safe. No one can like, hug you or reassure you with words enough to feel safe in that moment, because it is a foundational shift of how we are defining safety.

We are told from childhood, "safety and love is that you are the only one, you are the best, you are the most, you're the only chosen one, which means everyone else gets rejected. So if other people are not being rejected, therefore you're not safe", is the message. So we are working on that. it takes time, it takes time to over and over and

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over experience being safe in that, before we actually start to feel safe. So I know it's not like, it's not a quick fix. It's just not. sometimes people will ask me, "when do I know when I'm ready to be polyamorous? I've read all the books and I've talked a lot to my therapist, when do I know I'm ready?" I don't think there's a "ready". I think it's a "when are you willing to feel uncomfortable?" when do you have time and energy and say, "Okay, I'm going to go through this now". Some people don't have that struggle in the beginning, and I envy that. But I think there's so much healing that can also come from internalizing the reality that, "oh, I don't have to be like, my value does not have to measure against other people. I don't have to hoard love", which is what I was taught to do – like "mine, you can't have it" – I don't have to see my peers as my enemy or view their success as my failure, because seeing love as a winner take all, zero sum game.

But we can want to not think that, and still snap back to these very old messages. that again, our brains form around this social conditioning. So the short answer is: experiencing it in small ways, and increasingly larger ways. Some people jump right into the big ways and really invest a lot of time and energy into doing this kind of work. But experiencing it over and over, then your body starts to relax. It's just it takes time under your belt.

A lot of what I do, the work that I do with earlier polyamorous people is just, gameplan. How to tolerate that hard time while you're getting time under your belt, right? Of like, "how can we reinforce security? what words, what aftercare plans, What kinds of communication? just to have some stability, while you get through this experience until you stop needing that much hands on care". And you'll start, you'll wake up one day, and you're like, "oh, wow, I actually don't care to know all of that", actually, "oh, I didn't even realize you're on a date. Cool", you know. So it sneaks up on you.

But all of that – the caveat is that, if you're with people who help you feel safe. because if you're with partners who reinforce that sense of scarcity, who reinforce competition, who are lying or cheating, then it's gonna not feel better. or maybe you decide that you don't want non monogamy and that's not how you love, and that's fine. I think it's just, is that a realization? Or is that something that is jumped onto and chosen out of fear? again, why? why are we doing something?

But it sounds like you really want nonmonogamy or you want polyamory, In which case can there be a solid support system? And can there be a very thoughtful partner choice around, "I'm going to do this with them. I trust them that they have my security in mind, that they're invested in building that secure track record with me." I wish it was fast, but can take a long time. And its in layers, it's very much like an onion. So I hope you are being patient and kind to yourself.

Okay. Next question. **“Thanks so much for your video on spotting boundary pushers early. Since that guy was in your friend group. I'm curious if anything is different now that some months have gone by.”**

Yeah, back in October, I shared a story of somebody in my friend group who kind of creeped me out and I pushed back on him. Yeah, if you want to go back on my Patreon and watch that, there's not really any updates, I think that's the benefit of telling people early. “I don't like how you're acting” or “this feels off” or “no thanks. I'm not gonna go on, I'm not gonna go deeper into this.” He was very pushy. And I would set very clear limits of what I wanted to talk about, or how often I wanted to talk or whatever, and he would keep rolling over that. And I'm like, “Okay, well, if you do this, at this scale this soon, it's only gonna get worse”, right? So the fact that it is peaceful and content, because I didn't keep engaging with him, I feel good.

And the fact that he's in my friend group, I mean, he's sort of like, if we're talking a friend group over several countries, a few hundred people, he's in the mix, he might be at parties. So it's not a real tight knit thing where I see him all the time. And yeah, I just told people. I didn't talk shit. I didn't say like, “this person is toxic”, because I don't have evidence of that. He just made me feel uncomfortable. So if people want to ask me why I don't want to hang out with him, okay. Or if I see him with a very young woman at a party, I might go over to her and ask her, “you feel okay? you feel comfortable? everything good?” Not going to be her mom, but I might be – informed with what I know – be a little bit more protective, or at least checking in. reminding that I'm safe harbor, “if anything is weird, you can come to me”, you know.

I heard once that, we don't hold lines to change the other person, we hold a line so that they don't change us. and I really liked that. Because I think in the past, when I have not pushed back on those little, those little breaches of trust, it was death by a thousand cuts. I'm like “this, there's nothing so big that I'm gonna confront you”, you know? But no, I'm just gonna pull away from this because it doesn't feel right, like four or five things. I don't need more information. Because if I push past that, if I push past my own level of discomfort, maybe I start tolerating things that are intolerable, maybe it starts changing me because I'm staying in something I didn't want to stay in. So I really like that concept of, a goal is not to change the world around me, the goal is that the situation doesn't change me.

Okay, next question. **“how do you know if someone is telling the truth when they say they don't have veto power? How do you trust again, after being burned by so many supposedly non hierarchical people?”**

I think everybody who is trying to challenge hierarchy has experienced this. my heart goes out to you because the feeling of burnout is very real, that feeling of exhaustion,

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that "I don't want to be distrusting. But I am. because I don't want to get hurt again". And that's, I think, a very human response.

Yeah, I mean, I look for signs that they're working on it, signs that they're aware of it, especially if you're talking about a couple. I'm in coupleships. And I feel actually heartened when somebody is engaging with me and a partner, and is asking questions about couples privilege, or asking, "how have things gone to the past?" I don't really date with any partners, but even just spending time with a duo, with that security that the duo has, or that history of inside jokes etc, there can still be that sense of like, "the two of you are fine. I don't know if I'm fine". And so I am heartened, I'm encouraged. I like when people ask those questions for self advocacy. I think a good sign is if somebody's like, "I'm so glad you asked that. Absolutely. I've already thought about it. Here's how it's gone in the past for me", especially if someone is open about mistakes they've made or lessons they've learned. "Oh, yeah, totally, real. In the past, what I did 10 years ago, I did abuse my power in a coupleship, I did try to veto a person, and it caused so much harm, and I never want to do that again. And here's all of the things, here's how much I've been working on it, how much I have been fighting it and it can still pop up in small ways". You know? if there's that transparency and even that comfort of people talking about the nature of these power dynamics. that they are invested in trying to make it as equal feeling as possible. That is a safer sign.

It doesn't mean it won't happen, but it just means they take it seriously and you are not introducing the concept of critical analysis to them around this subject. I have to ask about evidence to the contrary, I have to ask like, "how's it gone in the past?" or even just seeing in real time, if they say no to an "unreasonable" quote, unquote, request. if I'm out on a date and their partners texting them in the middle of it and saying, "I'm not okay", and then they go and leave the date and talk to them, and there's no negotiation, there's no discussion, there's not... then I might be a little bit more side-eye. we want to watch people's actions, we want to watch "are you actually proactively considering my needs, even though I'm newer? even though I'm not embedded in your life? Do you see me as a person, somebody whose needs matter in this mix? Or am I just like experience, or a person that doesn't matter as much, and I just get told how it's going to be?" I don't really engage with that anymore. So I look for evidence to the contrary.

I don't have a whole lot of luck asking people, "Hey, do you not have veto power?" People say "absolutely not. I don't". or hey, "What do you think that hierarchy?" and they're like, "we absolutely don't want hierarchy." sometimes people will receive that question, and answer, "I'm not a bad person", quote, unquote. – I'm not demonizing hierarchy right now, I'm saying, people will respond and say, "No, I would never do that". because up here, intellectually, or philosophically, they don't agree with it. So

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they say, "I'm not that kind of person, I wouldn't do that". Instead, I want to hear stories. I want to see in real time, do you push back even at a small level on crossing of lines by a partner? or your partner meddling in what we do, do you challenge that? That makes me feel safer.

And even small things, like if a couple uses, if people in a coupleship, use "I" instead of "we". Then that's a good sign to me. if I'm talking to somebody, and she's like, "Yeah, I want this, or I'm thinking this", unless the situation calls for it and she's describing something that happened to her and her partner. Okay. But if I'm asking a person, "how does this usually go for you? What are you wanting in nonmonogamy?" and they respond like, "Well, We do it like this, or We've experienced it like that", if they're revealing that maybe they haven't done a whole lot of examination around seeing their individual identity as part and parcel, as a unit, with their partner. then I am a bit more cautious. then I might slow my roll, maybe even remove myself, because that shows up in bigger and bigger ways. the more ingrained you get with somebody, it's going to show up.

I have that video that I posted a few weeks ago on, "Can relationship anarchy and hierarchy coexist?" And what does "coexist" mean? how it's not a binary, no matter how long you're trying to challenge hierarchy, we might fall back into those default modes. So I don't want to say "you are a bad person", or like "they are inherently toxic or dangerous". I don't see things like that. I just think it is important, what they do with the questions is important, if they are doing work on it. if they see it as a constant bit of work and self reflection, or if they think they can just make a decision. And now "nope, now I'm not hierarchical. Poof!" because that's not how that works. there's a dailiness to it, there's a humility necessary for it. So look out for signs that they are practicing what they preach, that they are walking the walk.

And then it's a matter of risk and reward, like, "okay, yeah, they're really hierarchical. And they're super messy, but they're both really hot and I want to hook up with them". Okay, just go in risk-aware that they might not be able to see you fully, or you might be the only one advocating for yourself in the room. You know what I mean? It's not bad. It's just, go in aware of what the risks are.

Okay. Feel free to drop questions in the chat. I'll go to the next one that was emailed to me. **"My partner has a crush on my best friend."** Oh, I talked about this earlier. I mentioned this, or I alluded to it as an example. **"My partner has a crush on my best friend. I don't know how to turn my friendship into a meta relationship. What do you suggest?"**

Yeah, yeah, I mean, so I think what can be easy to overlook is that if we are friends with someone – even if we're not tight with them, if we're not close – if we have a connection with them, a relationship with them, we still have that connection, that

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relationship with them, it doesn't turn into purely a metamour relationship just because our partner, we now share a partner. It is that, plus our own connection / plus our own relationship, right? So be aware that your partner doesn't have the power to change the nature of how you want to know this person, you can keep knowing them the same way if you want. that can be discussed. you can step back, maybe it's hard to keep knowing them while you're struggling with the transition. You know what I mean? but it is not now overwritten by your partner being in the mix. It's just expanded upon.

I mean, my first question is usually, how are the relationships? How is your relationship with your partner? How's your relationship with your friend? How secure are they? How communicative are they? Is there any conflict? Is there any resentment? like, how's it going? Because the more complexity added on top of resentment, the more cautious we need to be. the more thoughtful and thorough we need to be, at trying to work on that resentment and untangle it and heal it and rebuild trust, right? The more that there's tension, then we add extra complexity, the more it can fan the flames of that tension and make it more intense.

And so yeah, if things are feeling otherwise relaxed, and they might just be awkward, or might just be new, then can you talk about your concerns with each other? Can you talk about fears and insecurities? What you're scared of having happen, how you can take care of each other? If any topics might feel sensitive? How can you be kind to each other? As you're in uncharted territory. Knowing full well, you're going to step on each other's toes. knowing full well, we've never done this before. So we're going to say, "Oh, my bad, I just hurt you. How can I make it right?" So we don't try and hold ourselves and each other to the standard of "this is only going to go smoothly". Because it's always just our best guess of how we think it can go well, and then we find out in real time how we feel about it. we're always collecting information as we go, of what does and does not feel good. And so I think the more important thing is, how do we respond to it? Like, "oh, I accidentally hurt you, how can I make it right?" I'm not trying to, of course, I'm trying to not hurt you. But I'm not trying to be militant or perfectionist about it, or so scared of doing anything wrong, that I just retreat and don't talk to my friend anymore. Or take a step back from my partner. we want to focus on what would repair look like, if or when, it feels weird. if for when it feels like trust is threatened. Talking about concerns and fears and insecurities.

It can be helpful to have clarity on the hinge connection. if your partner does start dating your best friend or getting close to them, what they do and don't share, you don't want to play a game of telephone. That goes for any polycule, but especially if there's a pre-existing friendship. Do you want to feed and water that friendship? Do you want to do more with that friend to reinforce and add stability to that friendship? Do you want to do more with your partner to reinforce and add stability? They're

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basically care plans, as I've often talked about. But yeah, it can sometimes be that the new hinge in a complex dynamic can sometimes want to do things so right that they're trying to have a hand in it. like, "okay, the two of you, can you get together? Can you? I don't want to ruin your friendship. So you have to make up now", there can be a little bit of involvement of the hinge in how the friendship goes. But the friendship is going to do what it's going to do. we don't want to add triangulation to the complexity. So naming what does and doesn't feel like each person's business.

And, yeah, I mean, there also is an argument for that being framed as a triad. Now, I'm not going to label it as such. essentially, at its core, it would be considered a V. of two people who are not intimate, share somebody who would be intimate with them. But I do see friendships as their own valid important-to-invest-in relationship. in which case, if the framework of seeing it as a triad is that you have your own dyad with your friend to work on, and that friendship kind of doesn't have – that part doesn't have – anything to do with your shared partner. Sometimes that framework can help people understand the importance, or maybe take more seriously the importance, of maintaining the friendship.

or, you let go of the friendship right? you don't have to... sometimes sustainability or maintenance looks like adding distance. And that's fine too. But can that all be negotiated together? As thoughtfully as possible? We're all just doing our best. But yeah, if you encounter something specific that you want to navigate, I can often give much more tailor made tips or feedback or anecdotes, the more specific the question.

Okay. Next question. I'm pretty good on time. **“Do you personally make a meaningful distinction between terms like lover or partner? Or is it all the same to you? I find myself avoiding the term partner because of past experiences with striving to achieve that label in a monogamous context. But want to be fair to the people I'm with and find a term that suits both of us, and don't want to let my hang ups get in the way of that”.**

I don't put a whole lot of stock in labels. I think that they can provide a sense of clarity and structure for people. So I also don't think it's a bad thing to want to name it something. It's just, Yeah, I think what the pursuit of monogamy or pursuit of the relationship escalator can do is put a lot of weight on what a word should mean. Like “you are now in this partner box. Therefore, we're going to do all this together. And we're going to do all that together. therefore, I'm safer, therefore you care about me at this degree”. Right? I think that's where it gets tricky.

What are we expecting the label to do for us? Is it just to offer clarity of how we are currently viewing each other? Or is it to be prescriptive of what we must do together, and what position we must have? is it seen as a fixed status or as a social status of

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some kind? are we hoping for it to give us reassurance? can that all be sort of untangled, of why are we wanting to name it something? Because in that, in that way, sometimes it can be counterproductive.

If you like labels or shorthand, are you both agreeing on what the shorthand is? I've shared before that, now that I'm in Germany, there are, I don't know how many different words for "friend" here. There's companion and colleague, and there's like, so many different ways that people will refer to a friend, and then they'll use the literal word friend, Freund, to mean their partner. So I will start saying, like, "Mein Freund" here and there. And they'll be like, "how many partners do you have??" And I was like, "oh, okay." so that also is helping me zoom out. this is all quite arbitrary, you know. And it matters that everybody in the relationship understands what you mean when you're saying it, you can make up a term, you can do whatever you want, as long as everybody feels good about it.

So there is the element of explaining your relationship to outside parties, in which case, you can talk about things like, "what do we call each other to my mom?" you know what I mean? that can be a strategy, that for simplicity you are not having to explain a lot of shit, you pick a word for outside consumption. But for internal reference, can you decide that together? I don't think there has to be a whole lot of intensity placed on it. especially because, I live with a partner, they're also my roommate, They're also my spouse, they're also my creative partner, and I will shift in and out of which label feels relevant to the anecdote. And they are all of those things at the same time. so I wouldn't stress too much, just talk about it.

Okay. Next question. **"Any advice for dating outside of apps? I'm partnered and want to show that off even more than I do. But I don't want to cockblock either of us and I hate dating apps."** Can you clarify what you mean? Your partner – you want to show that off, Do you mean like dating as a duo? Outside of the apps? Yeah, I guess I'm not super clear on the question.

In terms of broadly dating outside of apps. Where can you go that non monogamous people are? there are huge overlaps with kink spaces, with d&d spaces, with any kind of relationship nerd space. of course, most major cities have polyamorous meetups or polyamorous groups. But there's also online spaces that are hit or miss, it's a bit more of a roll of the dice, because anyone can come in. So if you are comfortable to be open about being polyamorous anywhere that polyamorous people or nonmonogamous people are, then you can see what the vibe is, right? It can be frustrating just to go to a bar or go rock climbing or something, and hit it off with somebody, but then they are monogamous. So I think I start first and foremost, "can I be where people who generally would probably relate to my relationship structure, where they will already be?"

I met the partner that I currently live with, I met at a polyamorous picnic. – No, that's actually not true. We got closer that way. I met him hanging out with a polyamorous friend at her tattoo studio. But yeah, spending time with people and their people and their peoples people. I've found a lot more satisfying connections through polyamorous network. And sometimes that takes time, and it can be slow. But also the apps with all of their instant gratification of meeting a polyamorous person tomorrow, it can be exhausting, because there's not that pre vetted process, that they are in network and know people who know people who know you. So there's a weighing of fast and more risky versus, slower and more frustrating, but maybe more accurate of a match.

Yeah, so the question is being clarified – **“show off in all the ways. we want to date together and separate. I'm very proud of people knowing about us.”**

Yeah, I mean, I mentioned before, there can be a trickiness to seeing the duo as a unit. you can date together. And also, if you're dating together, you are dating this person, your partner is dating this person, you are dating your partner, you know what I mean? so even in a trio date, there's four connections happening, there's four relationships: all three, and then two, two, and two. and those might look differently all the time, when couples are spending time with someone, that person hits it off with one person in a couple more than another, you know what I mean? so try and approach with curiosity, in that respect, and the more that it can be, like an “I” mentality, rather than “we as a unit”, the less disappointment I've seen people have just all around. and the more flexibility and being open to whatever happens, the more you can roll with it.

Um, yeah, and dating separately, going to one place where polyamorous people are. I go to polyamorous meetups with a partner, and we'll be standing together and chat, will break and go to different areas of the room and chat, we want to establish, “I'm me. You can hang out with me. I might go over there for a bit. You want to meet who I also date? No? Okay, let's talk over here”, just sort of continuing to communicate, “we are not a package deal”, if you two are not a package deal.

If you two are a package deal, I just think that that can be risky, that can bring some concerns. But I don't know you, I don't know your whole situation, just to be mindful of being really upfront, regardless of whatever the agreement is. “This is what the agreement is, what do you think?” to people.

But I think it's great to be proud of your partnership. it's great to be hot and out. And, so I don't, I think about going to parties and get-togethers. Most major cities have them.

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So yeah, well, we are wrapping up. We've got two minutes left. Let me see if there's another quick question.

Yeah, this one actually, I could just refer to my Patreon. a person asked, **“How do you know –”** So this is not a quick answer, but I could answer it by referring. Somebody asked, **“how do you know when it's time to just break it off with someone? I can't tell if I'm kidding myself and maybe it's a lost cause?”**

So that is a big question that I'm not going to be able to fit into a couple of minutes. But on my Patreon, because everybody in the chat are patrons... what is it called? I have from March of 2023. “Time to move on? 40 questions to ask”.

So that is a written resource from about a year ago, that you can just search into the search bar, just type in “40 questions”, that will come up. And that is something that I worked on with a partner. some things to consider if you're really unsure, if you want to continue knowing each other in this way or at all. it's a very personal decision to make. But I'm always happy to try and offer prompts that can get a conversation going to the best of my ability.

So thank you so much for being here. I'm really grateful for your support. I think I'm going to do this as I mentioned at the top of the hour, I think I'm gonna do this about every four weeks. I'll try and do one once a month. So I'm getting into a new rhythm and a new workflow, but these will be a bit more regular because I do want to be more accessible more often. So thank you, as always, I hope you have a beautiful rest of your day. And I will see you next time. Bye.

xxx