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Hello and Happy Sunday. This is my live chat, which happens every six weeks or so. I think the last one was in December. And it's a place where I like to create an opportunity where anybody can drop in at any point during the hour, and ask me something directly, especially if you are not on the pen pal level or higher. All right, first question.

So when living with a partner, how do you handle sleepovers with other people, especially if you're dating someone who also lives with a partner?

This is an excellent question to get started, because it is something that I've dealt with pretty recently. I live with one of my partners, and I date two other people who also live with Well, one lives with a partner and one has children, one week on one week off. And so a lot of times the logistics of where you stay out together can - Yeah, it can be a reality. So how do we hook up if we can't afford a hotel room every time? I think it really depends on who it is, what the situation is, context really matters a lot. For me, I date people who are also dating polyamorous people and live with polyamorous people, there is often some coordination. There's less room for spontaneity, but when the partner I live with is out for a date or traveling for work, and vice versa, that's when we will invite people over. And I am currently looking for a place that will have extra rooms so that we can create more fluidity and flexibility for welcoming people over. A partner could bring one of their dates over in a separate room, as long as there's distance from me and I'm not hearing anything.

But this all gets negotiated. Because everybody has different needs. And not everybody feels comfortable with that. you can be nested with a partner and be like, "Nah, I'm good. I don't want you to have a date while I'm here." It does require a little bit more creativity. Sometimes there are long stretches of time where I'll have partners that I just don't have overnights with too often, maybe once a month or once every other month, whenever we can figure something out. But there are a lot of other creative ways to still have quality time or even have sexy time, out in the world. And so it just requires a bit of collaborative negotiation of what is available to you.

I think that is something that we don't really discuss too often - and maybe we should more - when everybody is nested, that can present some points of tension. I'd posted recently on Patreon, about hierarchy and how there can be this couple's privilege of being nested with a person. And sometimes that can get conflated with hierarchy. And while they do often correlate, I don't want to say that they never

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happen at the same time, I just don't use those as synonymous things. You can have the privilege of constant access to a partner by living with them without imposing a power structure over other people. I try to make myself scarce whenever it is humanly possible and try to stay out with friends or accommodate other partners to come and stay here. If that is the only option. There's a lot of teamwork involved at the polycule level. I think that it functions better when everybody is in more of a team mentality. I'm not even friends with or I don't even know a lot of my metamours but I still want to be a team player. I think when we do get hyper individualistic or focused on "well that's not my problem, you figure it out" in more of a cold or militant way even, that's when it can add undue pressure or make it extra hard. So yeah, I think there usually are solutions - to make a long story short - I think there usually are mutually beneficial solutions if we all just put our heads together. even though it can be kind of annoying sometimes.

All righty, so going back to the chat questions. "I broke up with my partner. Both poly for one year, my meta is monogamous and has been having anxiety attacks whenever my boyfriend spends time with me. His guilt around this finally made us decide to break up." I'm so sorry that it's so stressful. "He felt he couldn't be there for me the way he wanted to, but we still love each other very much. And even though we're no contact for a month, I can't help but miss him. tips? Also ways to de escalate after a month?"

So yeah, a lot of times we do find ourselves in this position where we're at kind of a crossroads of structure. And it sounds like the hinge partner here dating a monogamous person was - I don't know, you can correct me if I'm misunderstanding - was prioritizing that monogamous person's needs. or was ending your dynamic in favor of preserving that person's mental health. which I'm not casting judgment. I don't know these people. I don't know anybody involved. but I do think that can be helpful when entering a dynamic to kind of understand who's a priority at the moment, if not a primary. That can just help to clarify our own expectations.

I usually try to stay guarded if somebody in the mix is monogamous. I keep my guard up a little bit longer. And I'm just like that until I can get a sense that this mono / polyamorous situation feels a bit more relaxed, and there's ease around it. because there can be mono/polyam ease. I mean, the tricky thing is that the boyfriend, the hinge partner in this situation that you're describing, has the most power and the most agency to negotiate both dynamics. And so while it can be tempting to be frustrated, that this monogamous person, this metamour is not calm. That her needs are our problem, that's why our relationship won't go forward. It does sound like the boyfriend was choosing something. And so we are now faced with "how do we relate

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to somebody who will put our needs second?" I will often step back and say, "I don't like the feeling of my needs being inherently second." So to speak to your question of, how do we cope with going no contact and we miss each other? There's a lot of grief that goes into this reality of a partner, even though we care about each other, a partner is still choosing to prioritize this person over me. And that is a reality.

I've definitely had a crush on monogamous people before. I've had a crush on straight women before where I was just, we care about each other. And, the structure itself is going to get one or more people hurt if we were to try to go through it again. So it wound up being kind of a splash of cold water, to let me come to terms with the reality of how this could or could not function. And that involves a lot of grief. And everybody grieves in different ways. So some people decide to take some space. And it sounds like with no contact, that's something that you are choosing to do. And then it's just kind of – we're always in dialogue with what we're doing during grief. Like "Is this helping? Is this hurting? oh, I miss this person, let me contact them. Well, that made it worse. Okay, good information." there's not really a rulebook for how we restructure or how we add distance with a person. It is a lot of trial and error to see, Does this feel like I could do it without harming myself? Does this feel like I could meet up for coffee, but maybe not for dinner? what is confusing? And what is not? what is a way that I could relate to you that doesn't hurt me further, that doesn't get my hopes up, that I would be prioritized in a different way if that's not going to happen, you know?

So there's a lot of self management of expectations when a hinge partner is unwilling or unable to prioritize your needs or advocate for your needs. Then we need to make sure that we are prioritizing our needs and advocating for them. Despite the pain that comes with it. A lot of times that can be a lesser pain, compared to trying to engage with somebody in a way that won't have our needs met, if that makes sense. So on my Patreon, I do have some recent videos: "coping with rejection", which I don't know if this would really, if I would frame this specific situation as rejection so much as coping with loss or distance. Or a conflict of needs and desires. That video might be of service. as well as, "how do we add distance without breaking up?" is a video that, again, the framing of it might not literally apply to this unique circumstance. But those two things I created in the last few months on Patreon to try to address if one of us wants more distance, or needs more distance, how do we cope with that in a very practical, tangible way? So maybe those videos could be supplemental to my spontaneous ranting at the moment. It's a really tough situation and there can be a lot of dashed hopes in that respect. And I empathize a lot with that struggle.

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So the next question from emails is, "you mentioned in one of your videos that you don't want kids, but your nesting partner does. As someone with an anxious attachment style and abandonment issues, how are you managing your insecurities, if any, in this situation?"

Yeah, so this I mean, my personal situation is in flux. My nesting partner is sort of like "maybe I don't want kids." but I can speak to the spirit of what you're saying. I've been certain since I was 17 that I don't want to be a parent, at least not from scratch. I'm happy to help raise other people's children. But yeah, there was a long period of time where the partner that I live with was thinking, "I would like kids", and that was pretty early in the negotiation of "should we live together? Does being roommates make sense?" Was this question of "what if we want kids someday?" so you meet the person you want to have kids with, that's not an overnight discovery, you don't meet someone and the next day decide to be a coparent. So that would be a series of discussions, at which point we could slowly move out. Or maybe I like them too, and we all move in together, and I help raise yalls baby. there's a lot of different ways it could look, depending on who else enters the picture. And so there was just this agreement to sort of be open to whatever comes our way.

Because being an anxious person, there's this temptation to anticipate every possible way that it could go. and plan for every possible contingency. And that's really a lot of wasted energy and a lot of unnecessary stress. Because we won't know what the next right step will be until we have all of the information, including who it is, what the circumstances are. and so, I think there's a bit of letting go, that has to happen around all of the unknowns. I trust that we have a process in place of communication, for if and when the unknown starts to reveal itself. and it's an agreement, "I'm going to put this over here on the shelf, and not obsess about it today." Because that's just tiring me out today. So I don't enjoy today.

Easier said than done. But yeah, in terms of having some insecurities, it sounds like this person is relating to the idea of, "oh, they want something with somebody that they don't want with me or vice versa." And how I manage it, I talk about it. I'm like, "that makes me really nervous, thinking that I'm going to become less important, or that you're going to abandon me when your 'real' family shows up." I've definitely had all of those conversations, and it can help take the power out of it. If we vocalize it, if we just say, "this is what my brain is telling me," rather than committing it to being a reality or committing it to be truth. "my brain is telling me that you're totally going to drop me the minute your 'more important' partner comes into the picture."

We are vulnerable, we share the silliness, this monogamous conditioning that we still carry with us, despite not participating in monogamy anymore, right? we can kind of

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laugh at ourselves. But as well, it gives our partner an opportunity to know what our vulnerabilities are. So they can be sensitive to not say something in a casual way that hits one of our buttons. if they know what our buttons are, then they're less likely to accidentally stumble onto them. But as well to give them an opportunity to reassure us and to say, "well, if I meet somebody who I would like to have children with, what would you want? how would you want me to approach that conversation? Would you want to be included every step of the way?" From "I really feel strongly about this person, oh, I think I might want to move in with this person, split time between both places, or maybe move out from you, like, what conversations would be leading up to that, right?"

The fearful mind can imagine just being hit with a big change all of a sudden. And maybe that is a rational fear from being raised in an environment where we were hit with big changes all of a sudden. those never come out of thin air, those impulses or those fears. But with people who are not inclined to do that, and especially if they don't have a track record of just surprising us with a dramatic change overnight, then we can talk about what it actually is. What are all the steps in between? So that I can know well, "this hasn't happened yet. He hasn't met a person yet that he feels this way about or he hasn't said he's thinking about moving in with them yet". if we know what that trajectory looks like, I won't fear point Z because point B hasn't even happened, if that makes sense. And so, just continuing to verbalize it and have your partners be your teammates in a sense that you are not alone in this fear, this insecurity. ideally they will be able to reassure you with their actions and their words that you are safe. even if you are not fulfilling one particular role that our society says is "more important"... of course, if they don't reassure you, then that's also good information.

Okay, next question. "I have a partner of two years who struggles to identify and express her emotions to the extent that she hates being asked, how are you?" I get that. It can be a broad question to try to answer. "She has an easier feeling-shorthand with her other partner of seven years. And that adds to me feeling a bit left out, or on the outside of her emotional world. Any thoughts on how to evolve towards more safety in her sharing her feelings without pressuring her with expectations?"

Sure. So I'd be curious if there is any ability difference, like I date a lot of people who are neurodivergent in a wide range of ways. And so a lot of times, I like to know how that shows up for somebody. So if somebody gets overwhelmed, for example, with the question, "how are you?" If they were autistic, that could be a layered experience of, "I don't understand that question. Or I'm frustrated with these social scripts." And, and so I've had very real conversations of, what would you prefer I asked you instead? Sometimes our partners can be the best directors on how to take care of them.

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because if we actually do want to know how's your day going, I would like to know if my language or my approach, or any of that could be received better in order for us to bond? Because that's essentially, "how are you doing" is an invitation to connect and to bond. And so, yeah, if there's anything that I'm doing that could be more accessible to a person, I would like to know that. it's almost a conversation about how you have conversations.

But yeah, a lot of times, there is more ease with longer term partners. And it can be kind of, there can be an ache when we see a partner have it easier with one of their other partners. you're saying this person doesn't struggle the same way to have the shorthand with their longer term partner. And it's, it can be tempting to compare, "why am I not like this? Or why can't we have that? Clearly, you're capable of having that – why not with me?" and I don't think that is invalid or wrong, I just think it can help to try to pull back from comparing the incomparable. our relationship is not their relationship. And there's so many other factors that go into that functioning incredibly differently. And so I just try to focus on this dyad. "okay, I want to connect with you. How do I do that?" and that could be a series of trial and error of, do you like getting gifts? Or do you like when I text you? Or do you like just having silence or having parallel play? what is the way that you feel more relaxed and more comfortable? and when we can find a place where we feel more relaxed and comfortable, then it can be a little bit easier to start to understand each other's emotional states. if we aren't really relaxed, then maybe we don't even know how we feel.

And beyond that, if there is any concern of – how you appear to feel is impacting me. And you're not communicating that to me, then I'll share "Well, this is what's happening to me, right? you're speaking really shortly. And you said you don't know how you feel. Or you said you're feeling fine. But the way you're responding to me is kind of making me tense up." I'll just describe what's happening and how it's impacting me. So even if they don't have the language to articulate any particular kind of emotion to clarify for me, well, then I'll say, "here's how I'm doing in response to you and in relation to you." And if that is or is not creating a point of tension. So when it comes to, how do we bond with our partners? if there is a block, I start by addressing that block, and owning my own experience. that's kind of all we can do. and find our way, that way. If their continued inability to articulate their express emotions feels like a deal breaker, then that's also important to notice. And we can decide, "okay, if nothing changes, how would I want to relate to you? How close would I want to be? How often would I want to see you?" I think expecting a partner to radically change how they communicate or how they behave with us could be just a source of frustration. And so instead, saying "I accept that this is what's happening. So then what do I want to do?" that can be a little bit more empowering and kind of,

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can open up pathways to a bit more of relaxed interactions with each other where we're not frustrated for not behaving differently. Does that make sense? I don't know if that answers your question.

Okay, next question. "My metamour keeps accusing my nesting partner and I of having a hierarchy because we want kids together. I don't really know what to say to this because we still do everything we can to make everyone we date feel comfortable and important."

Yeah, so I've posted on Patreon, I think it was just as recently as last week, what is and what is not hierarchy. and explored a little bit of this. sometimes we just have a priority or we just have a desire for asymmetry, we just want a thing – more time or "more commitment", a different kind of interdependence, a different type of integration of your lives with one person versus another. And I don't think non hierarchy means imposing perfectly symmetrical distribution of resources. Like "okay, non hierarchy means I have a child with each of my partners", that's not really how life works. And it's not really what desires line up with.

But if there is a dyad that has multiple points of couples privilege, so living together create some privileges, disproportionate time and access to a person. child rearing with that person, or having the intent to do so can create some couples privileges of shared finances, or having a lot more of our schedules depending on the other person's schedules, "I won't be able to plan a date until I know my pregnant partner's doctor's appointment" etc. You know what I mean? it's not necessarily synonymous with hierarchy, but it does create a set of circumstances where this one coupleship will impact other relationships. And so, whenever there's one or more points of privilege in a dyad, and someone from outside that dyad is saying, "Hey, this is hierarchy." I think it merits inquiry, and some unpacking of – "Do we? Do we kind of rank each other?" hierarchy being: ranking status and authority. "Do we have a ranked status with me being the future coparent and the current roommate? Do I matter more? If I'm upset, and they're upset, do you always default to coming to me first?"

These questions, I think are helpful to engage with, and to not just outright say, "No I said, I'm non hierarchical. So therefore, they're wrong." because we are taught from childhood to rank people, "you are my best friend, you are my second best friend," this is how we are taught how to relate to people. And so despite having a theoretical alignment with non hierarchy, it is very common to say, "oh, shit, I was doing a hierarchy." so that can be helpful to examine.

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As well, if there is a person saying that there's hierarchy... if you've all sat down and talked about it, everything within each person's power is being done to make it feel equitable, to make sure everybody's needs are met, and that nobody feels less important. Fundamentally, if that is being done, it could be that they're expressing dissatisfaction at an asymmetry. And then there's just not enough vocabulary, so they go to hierarchy, right? So I hear in that, "you're dissatisfied, or you're feeling like a need is not being met, or that there's a neglect piece happening. Okay, let's talk about that. How can I meet your need?" How can I try to get to what is underneath that accusation, rather than getting stuck up on the label itself? because I might disagree with somebody's framing, while still validating their dissatisfaction, while still validating they're upset. "I disagree with how you're describing my situation. And also I hear you" kind of thing.

And so that can sometimes be a little bit more efficient and effective if we go to "what are you literally upset about? what actions or what activities or what exclusions of you?" and it doesn't mean that having that conversation means now they get to be a co parent. a lot of times people will get defensive of "No, I just want to have a kid with this person. And they should deal with it." But having a conversation where we say, "I hear you that you're upset, how can I better meet your needs" that is not saying "I will do everything you want." That doesn't mean what you want is what you get. That means I want to hear you and factor in everybody's emotional state and everybody's reactions to everything into a potential collaboration on solutions. And it could be that it's irreconcilable. If somebody wants to have kids with you, and you don't want to have kids with them. And that's a deal breaker. Maybe the road ends here for that dynamic. but to not fear having those conversations both internally in the dyad as well as in the broader polycule. of what anti hierarchical practices could be created and put into place, that might make it feel more equitable. I think that can all be helpful. At least that's, that's what I do in my dynamics.

Next question. "Do you have any tips for long distance relationships? How is your experience? I particularly struggle with the separation after meeting again. Have you gone from long distance to close distance? And how's that been for you?"

Yeah, I have actually from my, it's in my Patreon, I have no idea how much it still stands up. But, three years ago, in 2020 – wow that was three years ago, I just had a moment. Yeah, three years ago, I was separated by an ocean from the partner that I live with, because I was moving to Germany, well, we were both gonna move to Germany. and I flew, and then the lock downs happened. And so we were just stuck a continent away for nine months. And so there was a serious relationship where we had day to day involvement in each other's lives, we had dogs and plants and

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shared expenses and stuff. Suddenly, that was long distance. And I have on my Patreon some videos with him, once he was finally able to come over, how we coped with that. and the short and the long term, what kinds of tension came up, especially as I was here dating, and he was feeling abandoned over there. thought I was just starting my new life without him. And, there was a lot that went into it being a surprise, long distance dynamic. And so maybe those videos could be of service.

But I also have long distance dynamics with a few people of various intensity. Some people I've known for a long time that they're basically comets, once a year I might see them. And I do feel deeply in love with them. And we don't have a desire to escalate in any particular way. So to speak to your question of struggling with separation after meeting again, it's one of the hardest things that I experience in polyamory. the high when they're in town, or I'm in town, and we have all of this 24/7 access to each other. and then nothing again, right? It is a withdrawal, it is real, there is an emotional drop most times. and I plan for that. I plan to have, to the best of my ability, a light social calendar after that. I plan, if I can, to have less intense work if possible. I try to make space following a long distance connection in person to anticipate that drop. And I plan – “where are my friends? Where's my community or my social connections that I can reach out to? that I can vent to? that I can commiserate with, right?” we want to feel not alone.

I also will have aftercare plans for when my long distance partner leaves again. Can you text me at the airport? And then when you land? then can we have a video date the next day, can we kind of taper off the momentum so it doesn't feel like a splash of cold water, of all or nothing? and so there can be care plans negotiated around that anticipated drop and withdrawal. But I mean, it is part of the beauty and the pain of loving somebody from far away, is it can be so intense and so much like we're binging on each other. And then there is a flip side of that coin, which means we are no longer with each other again. and you can opt in, or opt out of that. it is definitely optional. But it is something that I don't know if it ever goes away. And I've been doing this for 10 years, I have one of those partners for eight years. And it still happens every time. so we just plan for it.

But in terms of maintaining things while they are long distance, we have a lot of regularity. I like routine, I like to have my expectations managed. And so every Monday night, at a certain time, I have a video date with a partner who's in California. And it'll be midnight for me and the afternoon for them. And that regularity can kind of offset the pain of the distance. Because I have something to look forward to. And there is consistency, if not at the proximity that I would like, there's still consistency in our connection. there's all sorts of remote control toys, and ways that we can cook while we're hanging out with each other, sort of parallel play over video chat, watch a

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movie together without talking, there's a lot of ways to simulate touch or simulate ambient spending time together. that can also kind of mitigate that feeling of ache of them being far away. Trial and error goes into that. it depends on who you are, who they are, what you want, what they want. And you can see what feels like it might help offset that stressor that is distance.

Alright, next question. "you discuss care plans a lot. And I'm wondering, can you share more about what that looks like? Or how do you come up with what yours should be?"

Yes, a lot of times my negotiation and implementation of care plans is adjacent to or inspired by my care plans around kink. I know there's a lot of overlap in my Patreon community with people who are also kinky. But if you're not, it's in general, there's an agreement. we're putting ourselves into emotionally risky, or even physically risky situations that can potentially bring up a lot and it can be invigorating. And it can be cathartic. And it can also maybe trigger some stuff, or even just create a drop after we're done doing it, when we come back to reality. And so all of that can be offset with some care plans that help soothe us back into our day to day. and I take that sort of approach into a lot of my non monogamous relationships and say, "Okay, if something feels emotionally risky, or even physically risky, how can we be gentle with each other and accommodate each other's pain points, or acute needs? how can we help offset any of the potential fallout that happens before, during or after risk?"

So to get more specific, some of that is physical. de escalating a response if you have a trauma response. I'm not a trauma specialist. So this is not like advice from a therapeutic standpoint, I can just share as a person with trauma, and an anxiety disorder and agoraphobia, what can happen for me. if a partner has done something, said something or gone on a date, or gone on vacation with a partner and come back – and I'm hyperventilating, or I'm getting very hot, or I just really need to be alone, I'm overstimulated, there can be a lot of physiological responses to something that is emotionally overwhelming. or something that is new and different. And so yeah, I make sure that I'm well fed, well rested, I make sure that I prioritize sleep, I prioritize hydration, sometimes I'll put cold and warm temperatures on different pressure points. I'll put cold things on my chest and on my wrists. I'll go into a shower and alternate hot cold, sometimes just my system needs some deescalation from a literal trauma response. And you can speak to a therapeutic professional, if that is something that resonates with you, to just find out what toolkits might be available to you.

I try to cover my physical bases first, because it's the most accessible and a lot of times, I can be attempting to treat an emotional wound when I'm just physically

activated, and it doesn't work because I'm still physically fucking activated, right? I sometimes might need to go for a walk. Or sometimes I might need to dance it out, I have this fight or flight energy going on. And I might just need to put on music and just physically move to get that energy out before I can be calm and have a conversation again. So all of that to say, if there is a trauma response at work, then a care plan can include, "how do we tend to that to help you feel regulated again?" So the answer for that will be somewhat different for everybody. But that's essentially what I do.

Sometimes it will involve more ritualistic things. I mentioned taking a shower, but sometimes I need a lot of space if I'm upset. I need to not have new information coming my way. And it's not that I want to shut down my partner or tell them to stop talking. It's just, I'll have signals where I'm like "timeout. I need to now go be in a dark space alone ". That is a way for me to get back to regulation. And so not only knowing what tools might help us get regulated again, but at least knowing what our symptoms of dysregulation are, can help us signal to each other "timeout" in whatever way shape or form that's possible to communicate. Just because I think it's not as productive to try to strategize collaborative care plans with a partner if we're not in a place to be able to receive that, or give that. So that's the first thing.

Beyond that, a lot of verbal processing. I have with everybody that I date at the moment, we're all pretty verbal processors. and so I will make sure that there's time right after every "first". if there is a first, they're going to their first vacation with a partner for example. When they come back. I'm like, "Okay, can we just leave Friday night open in case there's big feelings?" if there aren't, great, we can figure something else out to do. But if there were big feelings, and there was no time to talk about it, that could potentially exacerbate things. And so we plan for potential fallout, logistically on the calendar. I block off just open ended time to be able to talk something out, or be able to have big feelings and hold space without being in a rush. So that can also be a mindful way to anticipate big reactions.

In kink, we also address injuries. Usually they are physical injuries, but can apply that to emotional pain points too. So let's say that your partner accidentally over shares. they're trying to be transparent, but then they get a little too descriptive. And now you've got a mental picture of exactly what kind of sex they just had, and that's not what you want. That can be a time where I say "timeout again." addressing if that caused me injury, if now I'm spiraling, because now that hit off an insecurity in me. I might speak to that. "I feel a little rattled. And now I'm feeling self conscious about X, Y, and Z." and so we address that specific injury where they'll say, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to do that", they'll atone for whatever misstep created harm – big or small. And then we will talk about. how can we counteract that? if it's – in this example – an

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insecurity that got set off, or I'm spiraling. can they reassure me? what's the equal and opposite reaction of prompting insecurity? Is it validation and reassurances and holding a person? whatever it is that feels is the sore spot, or the point of tension. is there literally an action or something that we can do, that can be the opposite of that? that can prove my fear wrong, or that can soothe whatever is feeling disrupted? And so that can be a collaborative decision that you have with your partner. Addressing injuries.

Broader picture around care plans, is – I will often have quality time that I plan with a partner, especially around big changes. I need a lot more care plans during big changes. And I think that needs to be maybe expressed a little bit more clearly, sometimes, myself included, when these conversations are had in public. I don't always need care plans forever. For example, my partner, having one of their partners sleep over at our place, and in the bed that we usually share. If I'm traveling or if I'm out on a date sleeping over, and someone sleeps here, it's usually chill. But if it's a new person, if it's a very intense new relationship energy person, if it's somebody I feel nervous about or awkward around, and then it's the first time coming over and sleeping where I usually sleep, right? Something that normally isn't activating could potentially be activating again. And that's very common and very normal. And so in that case, I have said to that partner, "could we have a date before? Or could we have a date right after or maybe both? could I bookend this scary emotional experience with tangible reassurances that I'm safe, and you're not going anywhere?" and after we do that once or twice, or a few more times, then I kind of don't need that anymore. because I have the track record of being safe. So my body has now internalized that I'm safe, right?

And so care plans aren't necessarily something you need every time. maybe they are, and that becomes institutionalized. But, they're a lot of times for me to some degree temporary, especially during a period of change or insecurity. Until that feels a little bit less heightened. And so yeah, so I'll have quality time dates before and after, I will want to have clarity on what my expectation should be too. what I know, when I know it. I might feel cheated upon if a partner is been sleeping with someone for three weeks and didn't tell me, but would I feel cheated on if they told me after the first time? should I know before they even sleep with them the first time? at what time should we know it? At what point do we feel betrayed? that can be really helpful to clarify and get really explicit about. "what do we know and when do we know it?" And that can be part of a care plan as well. Like "hey I have an update on a person I'm dating. Let me know when would be a good time. Let me know when you're in a good headspace. I don't want to just spring that on you when you're in the middle of a work meeting and have to go do something, now you're dysregulated." I like to give and request consent around when I engage with tough information. but

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that can all be part of an ongoing care plan. I know your sensitivity, I see your sensitivity. I also know what you need. And I want to provide that. Let's figure out how that translates to practice. And that is a collaboration as a team – the what, when, how, and why of it all.

So keep talking with your partners. But yeah, maybe have regular check ins if there is trial and error of what your care plans look like. if you don't know what you need, if you don't know if it'll work – Okay, “Let's try it this week. And see, let's compare notes – better? worse? the same? did nothing?” There can be an experimentation aspect of this, which can kind of lower the stakes and take off the pressure. Instead of “this is what we do now. These are the new boundaries.” if neither of you are certain, okay, give it a shot, and then compare notes and see what you find. because going back to an earlier point, we can't really make our final decisions without all of the information. The information is inclusive of how we literally feel in the moment, which we won't know until we're in the moment. we can often think this is my best guess of how this will go. And then in the moment, we're surprised by how we feel. And so we want to factor in all of that real time data as well. And not be too militant of “No, this was the original boundary on day one.” no. with new information, is there flexibility and fluidity? Maybe you just have regular check ins until you find what feels like a good series of care plans to have.

Okay, so next question. So glad y'all are here. Okay. “I think you've talked about this before. What is your current read on polyamorous folks dating monogamous people? Being a first for polyam, or someone who isn't opposed polyam but has always been monogamous?” Yeah. And it sounds like this is coming from someone who's not confident yet about polyamory. And maybe a bit concerned, that says “I'm a bit concerned that someone says they're open to polyamory, but they really aren't.”

Yeah, it's something that I'm continuing to speak with mono/polyamory couples about, that I want to develop by request for Patreon, a resource for people who are in mono/polyam dynamics in a sustained way. like a marriage where one person's polyamorous, one's monogamous, that is sustainable for some people. I think, inherently it depends on, Can the monogamous person at any time also date people? It's their choice to not be dating other people, but that is available to them. It's not a double standard. As well, is their emotional security, not depending on their partner being monogamous to them? if a monogamous person's security comes, in part from their partner's monogamous-ness to them, that would be maybe a fundamental incompatibility. but a lot of monogamous people are like, “No, I'm, I'm fine. You be you. I don't need that.” And so that's, I think, when it can be compatible. But that is usually my first thing that I will inquire upon.

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Being someone who doesn't currently date monogamous people myself, I have in the past, gotten various degrees of closeness with people who are monogamous or questioning. And the reason that I currently don't do it anymore is because it's kind of a preference. I have very limited time and energy and I prefer to date people who are actively relationship anarchists, which is not really compatible with monogamy. But I'm not opposing monogamy at all. It's just more of, I've discovered what works for me. but in the past when I have dated or gotten close with people who are monogamous or curious, that's my main first question – what is your feeling on other people that you're with, having this fluidity of sleeping with their friends? Or being really intimate, or moving in with somebody else? I kind of want to get a gauge on – is their monogamy inclusive of toxic monogamous patterns? of possessiveness, for example? And so I kind of like to get a sense of, are they unpacking mononormativity despite being monogamous. are you choosing this because it's naturally how you love or is it what you think you should do? Is there fear at work in any way shape or form?

And there's no wrong answers to that. there's no bad – nothing is wrong with any answer to that, but it's just helpful to know in terms of managing our own expectations. “Am I maybe going to be along for a discovery, along the ride with them for their discovery, of where their bounds are? What if they do need me to be monogamous to them? some people genuinely are still questioning, and a polyamorous person dating a person who's unsure does run the risk of “oh they've decided they're monogamous, so therefore I'm on the chopping block.” that can be a risk that a lot of polyamorous people don't want to take is, “am I part of your experiment or part of your exploration?” and it's fine to be experimenting, and it's fine to be exploring. it's just helpful to communicate with each other where we are, in what stage of us knowing ourselves, knowing our needs, knowing our boundaries, and are those compatible?

Depending on how you feel about the person, maybe that feels like a risk worth taking... I was hierarchical when I first met the person that I live with. And he was absolutely not hierarchical, does not date people in hierarchies. And then he met me, and he's like, “I don't know, I guess I'm willing to take this risk.” And I was still discovering, “oh, actually, maybe I don't love in a hierarchical way. And maybe I was choosing hierarchy out of fear.” That was my particular trajectory with that. And so he was willing to take that risk while I was figuring it out, but he kind of – for himself, not for me – he didn't give an ultimatum to me. But for himself, he kind of had a timeline in his mind of “if after six months, it's still very solidly hierarchical, Or if after six months, there's still this ambivalence of where I can be in this person's life, then maybe I'll start to remove myself.” I think there can be that internal care plan of “this is how long I'm willing to take that risk.” And I usually, like I said, don't explicitly say

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that to a person, because it can be interpreted as an ultimatum. Like “you have this much time to figure your shit out.” I don't advocate for that. But just internally knowing that we only have to be subjected to risk or uncertainty for as long as we are willing to be. And so that, even that doesn't have to be binary, we can be willing to take risk with the unknown and then also agree that we will stop after a certain point.

I just try to manage everyone's expectations. if I'm polyamorous and I'm dating a monogamous person, is there any risk that they might get their heart broken? is any part of them consciously or unconsciously wanting me to choose them? As if maybe they will be such a great partner that I will stop being polyamorous for them. that, unfortunately, even if we don't consciously think that, it can be operating underneath sometimes. And so I just don't want to set somebody else up to have their heart broken. I will explicitly say, “you know where I'm at,” but I will also continue to check in because even though they say “oh, yeah, yeah, I get it, I get it.” If any part of their words or actions starts to imply that they're starting to get their feelings hurt, that I'm not being monogamous for them, then I will continue to check in as well. So I think that's something that requires a bit of maintenance and continued check ins. It's not just one conversation. if that makes sense.

I'm gonna take a quick sip because my throat is getting sore. Okay, next question. “How to move past feeling like you were an experiment for a couple?” Oh my goodness, I'm so sorry. My heart. “Especially the self criticism of seeing the signs and ignoring them?” So that could look a lot of different ways.

I don't want to project my experience onto this question, because it is a bit open ended. But in general, a lot of people have felt they were an experiment for a queer person or a monogamous person or a couple. Any person that you're dating or people that you're dating, who are in flux, there is a risk of you not being seen in the totality of your humanity. Of your needs not being 100% centered or considered all the time. And that can be a blow, especially when ostensibly they cared about us. that can be a grieving process. There can be anger in unpacking that.

So in terms of the question of how to move past feeling like that, I just digest that anger, I process it. I digest that grief. Any of those shame spirals of, “how could I not have seen? I'm so stupid” – I don't think that's really productive internal dialogue, but it can happen. And I think maybe that's some sort of survival skill of just saying “never again, let me drill it into my head. Never again.” I don't think we want to move forward being guarded. I've definitely been an experiment for a couple. I've been harmed and abused by couples before. And I'm still open to dating couples. it took some time away from it. I had to process those feelings. I had to get through it and

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get past it. And then I took a lot of time away from dating couples, before I started to be open to it again. because I didn't want to re enter a situation where it kind of aesthetically looked similar, and then I would project my past unresolved feelings onto this new person or people. you know what I mean? So, I think long story short, we just process that feeling, as we would any other hard feeling around a harmful dynamic.

It's also valid to say, "no more couples for me". Fair. you don't, you're allowed to date or not date whoever you want, right? I don't really think that the goal should always be to overcome it so that you can be open to anybody. You can date whoever you want. I do think it can be helpful to continue working on it, regardless of if you ever get in that situation again, because sometimes there can be judgment cast on other people based off of our unresolved pain. that can create conflict within the community, and that is avoidable. So I hope that that answers the question. I'm really sorry that that happened to you. I'm really cautious. I inquire a lot about couples privilege. And if they're unpacking it. I inquire a lot about how things have gone before for a couple, how have past dating experiences gone? If they ever say, "Oh, she was crazy, or it was great until all of a sudden it wasn't" – there's all those red flags, I'm gonna see myself out. So we can be more cautious. We can learn from our painful experiences by getting more precise vetting in the future, as well.

Okay, we got a couple more questions. Actually, got a couple more minutes. So maybe I just pick one last question. Oh, my goodness, this hour flew by. So last question is – "do you have your own thoughts around how you view polyamory evolving in life, be it yours or someone close to you? I'm trying to understand nonlinear growth that may be more commonly seen for polyamorous relationships as people get older. So the questions are, does polyamory last? Is it something fun for now? What measure are you thinking of when evaluating if this dynamic is still right for you as you age?"

Okay, so we've got three minutes now. I'll go over a few minutes. I would rather do the question justice than be militant about time. Okay, so yeah, a common question will be, "can I do this forever?" and the only real person who could say if this is continuing to work for you, is you. A lot of times, people will have a bad experience and say "polyamory didn't work for me". And while it's perfectly fine to never give it a shot again – polyamory is incredibly activating and requires a lot of work, regardless of even if it's a structurally sound and functional relationship. – But I would say, it could be that type of polyamory didn't work or just that relationship was shitty. That person was an asshole, right? and left a bad taste in your mouth. Very few people in monogamous dynamics say, after a big terrible breakup, "Monogamy didn't work for me". you know? So I just encourage people that if polyamory feels like it resonates

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with you politically, as well as theoretically, it's how you think you relate to people and it just feels organic, then one rough experience could just be an indicator that you want to move away from doing it that way and into a different kind of way. I think this is why having polyamorous contacts and connections and friends and mentors can be really helpful, because we just need a lot of examples. We need to have it reinforced again and again and again, that this is not a monolith.

So around evolving, and how it basically has sustainability as you age, I've been doing this for 10 years, it's not the longest I've ever seen. But I think that is enough of an arc to be able to speak a little bit to this from personal experience. It evolves in the same way that friendships evolve, right? Sometimes friends get deeper and deeper and deeper and closer and closer. Sometimes you just start to become different people and you just drift apart. Or maybe you have a big breakup of friendships. It's not so dissimilar with polyamorous connections. I have changed dramatically from 25 to 35. The partner that I live with has been along the ride for 8 of those 10 years. And we are radically different people from who we were 8 years ago, because we've continued to grow and change. But it's been along a similar trajectory. I have really close friends that I had 10 years ago that I'm just like, "I don't know, I'm good." Maybe I'll send them a merry Christmas once a year, but we just are very divergent paths. I think polyamory is not so dissimilar from any other kind of relating, is my point. You, maybe you find some issues with it being sustainable around structural or institutional barriers. That is valid. But in a vacuum, I don't really see loving and having sex with multiple people as that different from loving and not having sex with other people, you know what I mean?

But to be looking to structural barriers, social and institutional, some people just find it way too hard to stay closeted for example. If you live in a really conservative area, if socially, you might lose access to friendships or family support, if you might lose your job because there's a morality clause – if it's in government or in the military, or there's a lot of different sectors, and polyamory is not a protected class. So all of that to say, staying closeted is a very real necessity for a lot of people. And if that is the case, some people can function by staying closeted. But some people hit a point where they're like, "I cannot grow older and live this way forever. Staying closeted." and that is really heartbreaking. But it is also understandable. There are external limitations imposed upon people who are trying to diverge from the norm, who just find, "I can't do this forever, because it's just too hard. They're making it too hard for me." and that's fair. I think you can love in a polyamorous fashion and still choose to not engage in more than one relationship at a time. I don't think that takes away your polyamory card. I think we make compromises for survival all the time.

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But yeah, if those situations are not what's applicable in this question, if it's more of like, "how do you get older? How do you have kids? Or just grow older with people?" ... It's funny, because a lot of times monogamous people will push back on me and say, "how can you love in that way? aren't you worried about dying alone?" I get that question, a shocking amount. And it's so wild to me, because I'm doing the opposite of dying alone, there's so much abundance. and especially if I were to have just one spouse and that spouse dies, I have so many other people that I'm really, really close with. Or not having children, a lot of times, people will also say, "oh, I want children, I want somebody to take care of me when I'm older." There's this strategizing happening, this fear of lack of community or lack of having people around you.

I find polyamory to be the antithesis of that. At least how I practice it, it's in a much more community oriented way. It's not focused on individualism. it is focused on, "how can we all have everybody's back?" And so, in evolving in life and getting older and starting to need surgeries, and feeling rickety and achy and starting to fear "what if I fall?" I have less fear in polyamory around who might be there for my surgery, or who might help me gather resources to fund a loss of some kind. Or who might have my back if a partner breaks up with me or dies. I might have other people that I can feel not alone in that. I really see polyamory as just boosting my sense of security as I age.

It's also helping me not really feel competitive as I get older because there's this feeling of abundance of resources and abundance of time and attention that I will have my needs met. I don't need to fear "My partner is dating somebody younger and cuter than me." if I was monogamous, there might be that sense of scarcity. But I actually – you know there might be still a fleeting thought of "Oh no, my own insecurities" – but I don't have this primal fear as much anymore. of having something taken away from me by the existence of somebody who is the embodiment of everything that I think I'm not. I don't worry as much because I have polyamorous community. And so I offer that hopeful thought as that answer to that question.

There are plenty of people who child-rear in a multiplicitous fashion, who are not polyamorous. I personally had four parents, including two step parents. and so what's the difference between choosing to have multiple parents, versus accidentally divorcing and then marrying again? and now you have four parents? a child just knows there's a lot of role models. a child just knows they have a lot of different people to have their needs met. so, functional will be functional, dysfunctional will be dysfunctional, but the premise of polyamory is not inherently dysfunctional at all.

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And in fact, if people are practicing the communication skills that are needed to sustain it at an enjoyable level, then a lot of children in polyamorous polycules are really well adjusted. They have a profound grasp on how to articulate their emotions and their needs. It is baffling. I have been bested by a six year old who was able to express herself a lot more succinctly and clearly than I was. I was just like, "this is really beautiful." And so, of course, dysfunction is going to happen. people are people. but I don't think polyamory is what does it, I think it's people avoiding dealing with their trauma or avoiding dealing with their own interpersonal conflicts. that is really more of a risk of jeopardizing the sustainability of that. And so, yeah. That's a long winded way of saying, I see polyamory as feeding into a flourishing growing age of mine. And if anything, I feel younger and happier and lighter the older that I get. I turn 36 on Saturday. So I know I'm not like, 75 years old. but I'm definitely not 20 anymore. And I have a lot less fear than I did back then. So I'm really grateful. I'm really feeling it now. Yeah, I love my life. So happy to share that with anybody if that's helpful or gives hope.

So we've come to the end of our live chat. Thank you so much for being here. Thank you so much for contributing your questions. If there are any questions that I wasn't able to get to, there are a few from my emails I wasn't able to get to. I'm happy to touch on them again in the next chat in five or six weeks. Otherwise, we can have email pen pals or one to one video chats. Happy to do that. You can do that via chillpolyamory.com to see my schedule. I hope you have a beautiful week. I love you so much. And I will talk to you later. Bye bye