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PATRON-ONLY LIVE CHAT: 7 January 2024

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Hello, welcome. Is everybody hearing me? Okay? Yeah. Thumbs up in the chat. Alrighty, so welcome. I think every six weeks or so I'm doing a live chat and I have a new setup now, hopefully better clarity. Hopefully still looking okay. At 8pm without a whole lot of light.

So I've got some questions. This is the space where I make available for everybody of every Patreon tier, I make available... Me. if you have anything you want to ask, any questions, any thoughts that are on your mind, in general anything that you just want to talk to me about, that you can have access to me without having to book a chat, without being at the 9 Euro Patreon pen pals here. So yeah, I just like to check in with everybody and be available if I can. So anyone who comes, as you come in, feel free to drop questions in the chat. I also have questions that were emailed and DMs to me. I do aim to prioritize the people who join the chat in real time. But I do have other things to talk about if you're just here to listen.

Happy 2024, And I hope that you had a nice start to your new year. Or if it wasn't nice, I hope that it's starting to get a little bit clearer what you'd like to do next, getting a little bit clearer and what's on the horizon for you. So with that spirit, I got two questions that were sort of in the same vein. "What are your own goals or things you want to make happen in 2024?" – talking about me – and "reflecting on 2023, did you do what you wanted to do?"

So I thought that'd be a good icebreaker, tone setter. And I'd love to hear from anyone in the chat as well. If you have thoughts, reflections, questions on starting this new year... but that means you put any stock in a new year, Do you put any stock in the calendar changing? Does that hit a refresh button for you? Or is it a little bit more like "wow, it's just another day"? I know different people have different reactions.

So to answer that question: my own goals, things that I want to make happen this year, this coming year. personally, would be deeper friendships, deeper chosen family. I want to invest more in the people I already know I like. without having to feel like I'm searching for new connections. can I strengthen the existing ones? And I would like more play. I want more sensuality. I want more spontaneity. I think I thrive in a very structured environment. I don't know if whoever's listening also does. I tend to attract people who enjoy structure. That said, I think it can sometimes box out spontaneity, impulsivity, play. and I'd like a little bit more balance in that respect.

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And honestly, professionally, same deal, I want more play. more fun. more integration also of my professional training. So even though I do have now 12 years of polyamorous experience, and I'm happy to speak from personal experience and happy to help people find the words to express whatever's on your mind, whatever you're going through. my professional training is on storytelling, nonfiction media analysis, I got a Fine Arts degree in documentary film production. And with a focus on editing specifically. And so yeah, with this most recent resource from last week being "I love you, man," the movie, sort of breaking down the polyamory coded media there. there are probably a list of like 50 or more TV shows, films, that I'd be interested in talking about. And I think in doing so, it's not just a fun change of pace, – though I think it can be that too – I think it also can be helpful to make the hypothetical practical. to give these practical examples. So you're like, "Oh, I relate to that", or, "Oh, I definitely don't ever want to do that". That this is what it looks and sounds like, without having to critique real people, how real people are living their lives.

So yeah, so that's a little bit of what I'm looking forward to, or what I've got my sights set on personally and professionally. And insofar as reflecting on last year, I think there's value in reflecting, "I don't know, did I do what I hoped I would do? And if not, was that also valuable?" there have been plenty of times where I was like, "I'm so glad I didn't get what I thought I wanted. I'm so glad that relationship wound up not working out, or I'm so glad I got turned down for that job. Because it turned out to be really grueling, and would have left me no space"... Different things that we aim for, maybe in hindsight, they worked out differently than we wanted, and maybe that also had value.

So last year, I really wanted to have more care and patience in my work, and raise the quality, lower the quantity, take more time on scripts, take more time and thought. Maybe run my videos by a few people and see their take first. it's extra labor. But I really was looking at – especially my short form public content – being like, "I don't, I don't love all of these". not everything is going to be a banger. But it's very easy to get sucked into what will perform well, and what would go viral. And I want to take that out of it a little bit more... obviously, I want to consider what you might like to see. But ultimately, I want to look at my portfolio and be like, "I would watch this. I would get value out of this." right? My target audience is people who have been practicing polyamory for a minute. I definitely welcome newcomers and I'm happy to hold space for you too. It's just, I think there's a lot of resources geared towards newcomers and so I want to go a little bit deeper, which means that it's a little bit less of the easier lower hanging fruit. and I think I've been achieving that the best I can, and I would like to continue doing so. it is less instant gratification but more of a feeling solid in what I'm putting out there. if that makes sense.

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And personally, last year, I wanted to stop going up and down with my family. which I didn't think would look like going no contact, it was sort of part of a longer arc of several years of "I want to stop tolerating emotional and financial abuse". and stepping away, setting more and more lines of "You can't talk to me like that. if you do I'm going to end the conversation" you know what I mean? typical almost 101 boundaries with abusive people. It wound up going in a direction of going completely no contact, and that I've grieved, and I think my last Live I talked about no contact, so I won't talk about it too much here. but that wound up weirdly – maybe not so weirdly – releasing all of this energy. it was like there's so much background RAM operating on the dysfunction of a dynamic that I don't want to be in anymore. but because they're blood family, I was staying in it a little too long. Not that I haven't done that with chosen family too. just how much energy I have and creative inspiration I have, ideas and thoughts and ability to be social with people, that I didn't have for years because I was just, on some level waiting for the other shoe to drop. or bracing myself or just digesting and processing something they had said recently or done recently. No contact at the moment seems to be giving a lot, even though there's grief there.

But, yeah, I just see my family for who they are, not who I want them to be. or how that role looks for other people. to start responding to my family like, "this is how they're acting". Not "this is how an idealized version of a parent would act" – no, like "this is how this parent is acting. how do I want to respond in kind?" So anyway, that is how the new year has been going for me. I think there might be value.

I'll offer some questions for 2024. as we are on this subject: "are the goals that I've set *my* goals?" if you have set goals, and I think "my" can extend to the people that we feel are extensions of ourselves too, our community, our relationships, "is it what I or we want? And need? What would feel good or rewarding to do?" That, I think can be helpful to recenter and make sure that our motivations are what we want them to be.

Do the goals have any militance or all-or-nothing attitudes? is there any hypervigilance? Is there any forcefulness happening in our goals? short of – I don't know, pushing for radical change at a government level, right? I feel like, okay, we can be more intense in that pursuit. – But with our own lives, are we being gentle with ourselves? can success or can working on it look a lot of different ways, depending on the day? and that we're not just locked into, "I'm either doing this and doing it well, or I'm not doing it and I'm failing". I think when we get into that sort of mindset, it can be easy to set ourselves up for just like, "Ah, screw it" by the third week of January, "I'm done. this is impossible". it's easy to get overwhelmed. And we can overlook the small wins and the small successes... If we also call that a success for that day, or that week, you know what I mean?

And potentially related to those two things: “Do any of the goals have any ‘shoulds’?” I think it can be helpful. And “if yes, Where's that coming from?” Because not all ‘shoulds’ are the same in my opinion. If it's originating from our moral code, “I feel like I should be more transparent, I should strive to give, strive to give more energy and balance to my partners”, then okay, yeah, if that's what the should is saying... But if the shirt is coming from, “I should exercise more” for example, that's a common one. I think there's value in asking, is this coming from messaging that somebody else is giving me? Is there any internalized thoughts about my body, and by extension, what it says about me, my value, desirability, things of that nature?

That is an easy one... I think one that I heard recently was, “I should put more energy into sensuality. I have a low libido and I should be wanting to change that”. I've heard that a few times the past month, and – aside from asexual and demisexual people on that spectrum, of just that's how your libido functions – People who, this is a change, right? a change in their libido. and they're feeling like they “should” be working, that's a moral failing of theirs. One, I've heard it happen. Well, I've heard it largely happened in two ways – one: hormonal changes, or medical changes, like antidepressants, or HRT, or something literally outside of your control, that is changing desire, but then still saying, “I'm not performing in my relationship, I'm not being my gender enough”, or whatever it is, right? that can and that has come up for people, despite it being out of your control. And two: I've seen it come up a lot with, trauma, or grief, or just heaviness, we're feeling not in the mood. And that's okay. And just, can there be gentleness and grace there? if there is any shoulds like, “I should be changing this”, any shaming on that kind of thing or similar? Can we ask where it's coming from – past, present or future? Are our partners playing into it? You know, that's just as an example, but just I think, whenever there is a sense of obligation, and whatever our goal is, can we ask why and to whom, and who benefits from it? And is it really a huge deal? and all of that?

So those are my thoughts for that, whatever you've got your eyes on for 2024. Some thoughts for reflection.

Okay, so we've got a question in the chat. “I've got a general prompt and can later ask a more targeted question. Do you have any thoughts or advice for people involved in multiple RA poly relationships while also engaging in power exchange? And 24/7 kink with those partners? How do you see poly in 24/7 Power Exchange dynamics overlap?”

Sure. So kink not being my specialty, and me not being a kink educator, sex educator, this is just my opinion. because I think there is – I don't want to be framed in that way of an authority on that topic in particular. But from my experience, and to that end, I have started to try to use the term “authority exchange” instead of “power

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exchange” just to reframe that these are roles and not actual power. because if we can renegotiate it, then have we actually given up power? Or is it more of a simulation of giving up power? And I think that is also how we can differentiate the power dynamics of like, is it actually egalitarian power at the end of the day? and we are choosing to trust somebody to tell us what to do today, or in general in perpetuity, right? So I don't know what your particular 24/7 dynamic looks like. And again, I've not seen all the ways that can look, but I have grown on this topic. I think I have, even previous resources on ‘what is hierarchy? What does that look like?’ And I had been framing kink as hierarchy because I thought, “Well, somebody's telling me what to do. So they're in charge of me” but it's like, in terms of structural ability to negotiate my situation, without harm coming my way, am I actually subjugated? Am I actually powerless, or I'm just enjoying this role, and somebody else having that role? And those being two very different things.

So as long as everybody has the ability to negotiate what their situation is, and how people are treating them, and weighing in on decisions that affect them in a way that they want to weigh in on – if at all, sometimes it's like, “make this decision for me, just tell me where to go”. But even that, I think, is a decision of like, “I would like to not weigh in”, right? You still have the agency to say that. So yeah, that's kind of how I reconcile those, or that's kind of how I've started to use a reframing of it to actually articulate the power dynamics. And not confuse or conflate those two. So I don't know if that's helpful.

I just realized my vines are kind of like grown out of my head ... I'm trying to grow living wallpaper. It's just taking time and it's winter. So it slowed down a lot. But it's been fun. You may have seen in my videos, seeing them slowly creep along my wall.

Okay, so next question that was emailed to me: “how to avoid the trap of being the one always available to match my partner's schedule? I'm more free, living alone, Freelancing, my partner lives two hours away.” They mention it being frustrating... “For me, it's not a problem. And I also saw my partner's effort, but I have a bias with power dynamics and manipulative situations in my monogamous past.”

Power dynamics coming up again. So to this person mentioning manipulative situations in the past, I'm, again, I'm not sure how that looked for you. But I wouldn't ignore the brain connecting those dots. I wouldn't necessarily say that, therefore means they are the same. Because that's not always the case. But Can there be thoughtful inquiry into what's happening? And if there is a similarity, if there are manipulative situations happening, even if the only outcome is to get more info on how they're different? Right? Like, I think inquiring about those things can be neutral, and can even benefit when the brain starts being like “they're using me” or “they're treating me wrong”. If we have actually engaged with that idea, and had

thoughtful conversations and explorations about it, then we now have the ability to be pointing at that be like, “nope, I've already checked, brain. we've been through this.” and it gives you ammunition to speak back to the spiral that might happen, right? Or you discover, “ooh maybe maybe I was on to something”. So, inquiry there I think can be valuable, regardless of what you discover. Even if you're discovering exactly what you would hope you would discover.

Um, so in terms of the schedule and specifically the idea of being available. Like “I'm the more available one, so therefore I need to stay on call” or “I need to shape myself to fit into the limited spots they have available”. This is a really common in complex non monogamy. People have multiple partners, multiple jobs, multiple kids, the more added commitments then the narrower the window of time.

The frustration piece jumps out to me. so frustration was mentioned in this person's framing of this. I'll question, I'll often then ask like, “okay, so I'm frustrated on the regular, what would need to be different? what circumstances would need to be different for me to feel not frustrated? Or any more or less frustrated?” And that might have a dozen answers to it, right? But just asking, “what is it that my frustration is trying to have happen?” Because usually that agitation is trying to create a change. So what change does it want, even if it's not possible? And if it can't, or won't change, then how long would I be willing to do this in this way before I need to change what I'm doing, what I'm available for, before I need to change the type of relationship I'm offering, right? Because that ultimately is what we have control over. We can request changes, but even if they want to do that, they might not be able to.

So but first naming what change would be in a dream world? And then yeah, seeing at least for myself, “how long would I want to do this?” I don't put that to my partner, usually, because it could be perceived as an ultimatum. Like, “I'll do this for six more months, and then I'm gone”. You know what I mean? we don't want to necessarily put them in that position. But just in terms of knowing, “I won't let me down. I won't keep me in this dynamic forever”. it stops being as doom and gloom for me. So maybe that's a helpful way to look at it, of how long would you want to keep doing it.

But sometimes, small or large change can be negotiated based on that, like, “okay, so they inconvenience themselves more often”, for example. “with the change that I want, okay, I'm not expecting them to be as on-call as me because of all these commitments. But if I'm 100% of the time shifting and shaping, and that is the source of the frustration, then could we routinely have a little bit more give from there? would they be willing to rearrange things for my convenience sometimes? Like an 80/20, or 70/30? If not 50/50. You know, because we do want to factor in ability and access... seeing them make an effort on a one-off can feel good.

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– But um, let's see, my default microphone is changed. Okay, y'all let me know if my sound or video goes in and out. Like I said, it's a new setup. So there are some unpredictable elements. –

But seeing somebody do something once, okay, that can feel better this one time, but it often doesn't feel better until it's a pattern of changed behavior. So I've only really sustained relief from frustration when the change is regular. And we've decided on what we're working towards, as a new normal. And are we doing that regularly? and then sometimes, even if it takes a while to turn the ship, there can be relief and optimism because we're seeing steps towards a shared goal.

But on that, I do also caution people of naming: Wishing versus Planning, or naming Emotion versus Action. a lot of times people will say, “one day, I'd love to live with you”. Okay, “but what are the points from A to B? Are you ready to think about that now, because I need to literally plan my living situation in the next year or two? And am I planning...?” you what I mean? there can be this future-tripping, this imagining what an ideal future would be. And I caution against hearing that as, “okay, so we're doing this then”, because those often aren't the same thing. that can be where a lot of strife comes from. I talked to somebody the other day, and they were like, “Yeah, my partner said, ‘I would love to go on a trip with you’. So I came back with all these ideas of hotels and good prices, and they were like, ‘Why are you planning this? I just said, I would like to’”, you know what I mean? so just clarifying. “Are you saying that because it's an idea, or are you ready to plan?” And if the answer is ‘No, I'm not ready to plan’ and you notice you're going up and down with the idealizing, then – I've been in a position before where I'm like, “can you just not tell me your idea until you're ready to make that an action? Because otherwise, there's too much tension. There's too much anxiety or there's too much disappointment. I started expecting it. I started hoping for it. You've set up my hopes and now it's like, I'm waiting around.”

In terms of this asymmetry of availability, of ability to adapt and adjust, if it winds up being that the other person cannot budge at all, then, “Okay, do I just not have my time be default-flexible?” You know, “even if I do have that night free, do I not default it as possible for them?” Not in a punitive way, not in a like, “Well, you didn't change. So you get less of me” way, but more in a, “what could be sustainable, what can I do and what are my limits so that I don't resent you? so that I don't feel frustrated? So I can keep doing this?” When we set those kinds of limits, It's a way to keep that person in our life, because then we're not getting so Done at some point, right? So I see that as –and there can be trial and error – but I see that as a way to find what fits. And if things ever can change in a tangible way, then you revisit it, but right now at this pace, what could I keep doing without eventually being Done? So I hope that answers the question.

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Okay, I got another question in a direct message. "I'm currently solo poly navigating dating. I am in a great physical relationship with one of my best friends" – lovely! – "however they want to call it off." – Oh. – "if either of us see anyone else. My question is, What's your perspective on staying in a fulfilling relationship, even though it's only for a season?"

So I suppose I'm curious if you feel like you and they are on the same page about what it is you're building? Like "is it okay that we're friends with benefits, but the minute somebody gets a partner, or somebody you'll plan a future with then just hard cut? and what does the hard cut mean? Does it mean just no more sensuality? No more physical intimacy? Does it mean they'd want no contact for a bit to reimagine you back in a different context?" so I wonder if there can be clarity between the two of you on what it is you're expecting and why. And that maybe stays a question mark for now. But I suppose it's a less common thing that I see, that this physical friendship has this expectation of exclusivity. maybe I'm misunderstanding the question, feel free to clarify.

But in terms of the question of what's the perspective on staying in a fulfilling relationship, even though it's only for a season? I mean, what is the season? What are the limits of this season? Is it literally "I'm only living in the same town as you for the summer and so yeah, let's just do this while the circumstance is this way"? if there is a perceived time limit, even hypothetical, can you all be on the same page about that, too? because it could help prevent some unpleasant surprises. And just to continue checking in on it. But yeah, I'd be curious about the desire for exclusivity. And do you want to do that? Do you want to keep saying yes to that? Is that something you want to challenge? If not, risk/reward. we want to prevent resentments. so if somebody *happens* to you, and you're like, "oh, this person's amazing. I'd like to get to know them". At what level are you "seeing" someone else? Right? Is it when you've just met the person? Is it when you've gone on one date? Five dates? can those lines be defined to avoid or minimize any unpleasant surprises there, because this sort of looser-defined dynamic can be too easy to not be on the same page. So that's what I would recommend is just clarifying those things.

I had a video go viral last year of "situationships don't have to be unclear". – And I don't particularly use that word in my life, but just because it was in the zeitgeist – casual connections, we still have expectations, we still have things we want and need from each other. we could still easily feel betrayed in a casual connection, so can we name what those things are? So we know exactly what it is we're navigating. And then I would be curious if, with that clarity, if then clarity on what you would do next becomes obvious to you, right? I think a lot of times this "well, what do we do?" is an abstract distress at the lack of clarity. So clarity to be pursued first.

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Okay. So someone in the chat says, "I've done exactly that." – Oh, this is about the previous question. "I usually have more time. So I've specified a certain amount of days a week, I'm available basically more for me not to choose me or other dates or friends instead of waiting or making myself frustrated, because of the difference in intention to meet". Exactly. having available time doesn't mean it needs to stay available to that person. So we want to look at how available we want to be. And if it's matching energy for energy. Or maybe it's chill, and you're like, "Yeah, hit me up when you hit me up, and then I'll move things around for you" so I think it's really dependent on how we're reacting to it. because that's informative of how or if our needs are being met, or if we feel like we could keep doing it in that way.

Okay, next question. "I'm having trouble feeling equal in our supposedly non hierarchical polyamory because one of my metas gets to spend four days a week with our shared partner" – we've got scheduling again – "one of my metas gets to spend four days a week with our shared partner, I only get to see her once every two weeks. how can I be equal, if this is how she's prioritizing us?"

this is common, this is a really, really common frustration with the calendar. concern about what that means in terms of hierarchy. I'm actually making a short video on this soon. So I'll fold in some of those ideas here: is priority being confused with power? is the existence of equal time being conflated with the existence of equal power? So an example that I often use – sometimes I'll draw non romantic or non sensual dynamics as a touch point that's a bit more accessible – If you saw your boss once a month, and you saw your coworkers every day, does that change the power that they have? Does frequency change the roles? So people who have more access, more time with a person, *can* also have more power. they can go together, but they aren't synonyms. And so I try to be thoughtful about that, like, "am I conflating these two things or assuming one because of the other?" Similar, I see this with people who put themselves in sort of a primary position, then they assume that they should have more power – Err they assume that they should have more time as a result. And that doesn't always go like that. Can we clearly distinguish those?

If the question is: this persons seeing your partner more, do they have more power? I would see, well, is your meta in charge of your partner's calendar? are they in control of your partner's work schedule? or housing? do they have pull in terms of getting what they want, even if your partner might not choose to spend their time that way? that is how I would see it be an asymmetry of power, right? Because otherwise, if the partner is deciding what they want to do, and that's just where they'd like to be, it can be painful to not be on the same page about how much time you have together. I just caution against comparing with metas. Because, does it mean now that your meta has power over you? Or is the partner just choosing where they'd like to spend time? Priority, again, is not power. Priority can result in giving somebody more power

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but you know, some different connections do different things. Like imagine, even in monogamy – do partners compare with friends? Or creative projects? maybe sometimes... but does it mean now like, “Oh, you're spending a lot of time on that creative project rather than going on dates with me, now that creative project can tell me what to do” – you you know what I mean? so I just try and align like, “if this were a different situation, would I be kind of assuming this or ascribing this?” Maybe upon investigation, maybe there is hierarchy, and that is a sign of it, right? So I'm not saying it's impossible, I'm just saying can they be parsed?

Um, so yeah, and so in addition to time or priority being conflated with equal power, is equal time being confused with quality time? Because, well, not all time feels the same. is it domestic? Is it adventurous? Is it erotic? is it draining? If you're having heavy talks every night. Is there any dissatisfaction with the type of time? And it feels like “well, I want more, because I'm dissatisfied when we leave, I haven't gotten my needs met or haven't felt good in this connection”. Okay, if it's not an option, if one or more people don't want to or can't have increased in quantity, then do you try to switch up what it is you're doing together? that can be a way to see for sure, which aspect is bothering you, or bothering you the most.

So in terms of this idea of equality versus equity, I do have a caveat on it, but it might not be the one you expect. So in short, equality versus equity: equality, “everyone gets the same stuff”, equity is “not everyone wants or needs the same stuff. So let's base it off of need and ability”. It's not perfectly applied, in my opinion, to interpersonal relationships, because the person allocating the resources, in this case, the shared partners time, they have their own wants and needs. So a partner saying, “I want four days with them. But I don't want four days with you”. It's not the same as a government saying “this type of person should have good education and clean water, and this type of person doesn't deserve that”. You see what I'm saying? Like it can be a little bit tricky because in a *supposedly* neutral government, justice would be, yeah, allocating based off of need and ability. But for your partner's time, can we just be mindful of if we are expecting justice to look like the partner doesn't have a say in what they do, that they are a neutral party in divvying up of their own time and energy?

So yeah, sometimes there is dissatisfaction. There may be a part, like maybe their partner does have more need, and they don't want to be the one to fulfill it. if they want to live with a person and see that person every day. And see this person over here once a month, for example. maybe this person over here has much higher emotional need, much higher resource need. And still, the shared partners like “here's all I have to give you though, so I can't do what you're asking”. And I don't see that as injustice, I see that as a negotiated relationship, right? As long as it is negotiated. but a lot of times this idea of equal power gets conflated with equal

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resources. And that's, that's not usually how it plays out. that's not usually how relationships organically go – just speaking in generalities, I'm definitely open to a hyper specific example where this doesn't apply. There's usually those cases but yeah – a negotiated lateral relationship is not the same as an authority figure depriving you of something. So that's my thoughts on that.

Okay, next question... – I get so out of breath. I think I mentioned this in my last video. I don't breathe right. I don't breathe enough. So I'll just be talking and then gasp, just as if I were running. Hey, another 2024 thing I want to work on.

So: “tips for navigating parallel poly with one partner and kitchen table with others? A new connection isn't as keen about hearing about my other partners due to jealousy, and I don't want to push boundaries and make them uncomfortable. But I also don't want to get into a Don't Ask Don't Tell situation with them, as I am aware that could lead to issues later on with all partners.”

It's, yeah, so it depends a little bit on what navigating kitchen table over here, and parallel over here does. does that feel like you're you're pulled in multiple directions, or you're being asked to hide or suppress or withhold things that feel like you're compartmentalized in a way that's uncomfortable? because I think that that can be helpful to just be like, “which parts of this are causing tension? where are the points of tension in this for me?” because there are plenty of people that we know, that were friendly with for example, or a sibling is not necessarily hanging out all the time with our partners – it's not a one to one, but just there's plenty of relationships that are parallel without that being a problem. – so, yeah, just first investigating, “what is not feeling okay about this for me?” and it sounds like there's concern about what this could potentially lead to.

I'm not really a proponent of Don't Ask, Don't Tell with ongoing relationships. I think with some open marriages or swinging, if it's a one-off hook up and they have a Don't Ask, Don't Tell arrangement, sometimes that can work because it's not an ongoing relationship. but, if somebody doesn't want to know anything, Seeing no updates, no changes, not being included in any changes... they'll see it eventually. they'll find out eventually, right? Because if it is integrated into your life, if it is a regular part of your life, they will see a text message or see a photo on Instagram, You know what I mean? it will come through, we can't totally isolate ourselves long term like that, not that I've seen. So it can be much easier, even though it's uncomfortable, it can be much gentler, to engage with those updates as they happen rather than have all of it crashing at once. if suddenly, “oh, this person I've been seeing for a year, we're actually going to move in together”. if that's when they get the update, that could then potentially create some high stress situations, or even a feeling of betrayal, even if the person asked to have information censored.

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So yeah, asking why? What are you hoping that the withholding of information will do? Is it because you're feeling tense or competitive or fearful? Or is there just disinterest? I think that is a thing, and that has different implications. If somebody is blocking it out, or are they just not actively asking? There can be value in negotiating what kinds of information can you not withhold? Major life updates? If you're thinking of making a plan? Like "I'm thinking of this summer, going on a vacation with one of my partners, or a couple of people on my polycule, I need you to know that. So we won't be making plans." So negotiating what types of information feel relevant for the parallel partner.

I also have this resource on my Patreon... Let me see what it's called... "is it radical honesty, or too much information?" It is a starting point, in my opinion, but if you just look on that on my Patreon, it offers some questions about what is too much information. Because there can be a "some ask some tell", right? Of, "I don't want to know about your sex life. I don't need to know about how great your date was. That feels more bothersome to me, and if you don't mind being minimal about it, then that's what I want right now". Right? It can evolve, it might not. But just getting clarity on what level of detail feels not necessary, while still you get the highlights across, without feeling like you're censoring yourself. Yeah, that resource could offer some questions of finding that line of when is it appropriate? And when is it necessary? And what are the motivations? It's more of a prompt – I don't assign to people what is appropriate for them to know. That is very much negotiated and mutually decided upon.

So that's something you co create with your partner, but I do kind of raise a little bit of a concern flag when somebody is saying, "I don't want to feel uncomfortable, ever". Sometimes there can be triage of like, "I've got an awful chaotic week, can you just not bring this to me, because then I might spiral and I can't afford to spiral this week", right? There can be a temporary "tell me nothing and then we'll catch up later" kind of thing. But in terms of ongoing, we got to engage with the discomfort at some point. It doesn't mean you've got to be best friends, or hang out all the time, but just knowing about the reality of the totality of your life. If you're building a life with someone, that is important. But you can discuss on what terms and what the limits are. There might be some trial and error there... they might be like, "Yeah, I'm okay knowing this", and then they get totally dysregulated in the moment. Then, "okay, so if you get dysregulated in the moment, how would you want me to take care of you? How can you signal to say pause? Then we'll reflect on how could I have said it differently? Was it not that I went on a date, it's that I said it was an amazing date?" We want to be sensitive to whatever their current sensitivities are, and, not completely shut out reality. That's my approach. So I don't know if that's helpful.

Okay. So next question. "Sometimes the complexity of polyamory leaves me feeling tired. Do you ever just want a break?"

Sure. Sure. Yeah, I think probably the hardest point was – Well, there have been a few hard points. But when my dad was dying, and I had a partner that was cheating on me, and I had another partner that was really challenging at the time my ideas around power and hierarchy. because in the early years, like 2012, 2013, I was like, "No, I need hierarchy, that's the only thing I can imagine" because it's so relative, it's so adjacent to monogamy, it was my only frame of reference. I was so scared everything would unravel and I'd fall apart if I didn't have a secure assigned status above other people. So that's also why I have empathy for people who want it. But that said, I still appreciate that challenge happened, and continued to happen. It was just very overwhelming.

Can we look at – if there is overwhelm, if this exhaustion is happening – can we look at the totality of what's happening? Because our relationships don't exist in a vacuum. if you are chronically ill, if you are experiencing loss, if you're exhausted and burnt out at work, what are all of the pressure points? And then what do we have control over adjusting the dials a bit? Because I have taken breathers, I have said, "can we just pause on heavy talks for the next couple of weeks? because I don't think it'll be productive anyway, I'm completely fried and burnt out, I really need to recharge. So I want to temporarily really focus on just getting through whatever's right in front of me". As long as that doesn't become a kind of a way to avoid ever dealing with it, kicking the can down the road. we do want to address the non monogamous relationships we've created. Unless you just totally want to take a break from relationships, which can be fine too.

I have felt stretched thin with how many relationships I had. And then had to really completely tell some people "I don't know that I can conceptualize building something with you right now". You know, and kind of get really clear on polysaturation, and how I'm doing too much, not feeding myself enough. are you getting enough alone time? Are you getting enough recharging time filling up your own cup and stuff like that? but this is a very broad question of, "sometimes complexity of polyamory leaves you tired, do you ever want a break?" what is it that's making you feel tired? And what are the mitigating circumstances and the other influences adding to that exhaustion? What kinds of things recharges you, what kinds of things inspire you, are you still ultimately – like you're tired but – you are doing a thing you know you want to do? or is the exhaustion revealing itself that this is way too much risk and way too little reward. Like "this is work I don't want to do."

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it's okay. I don't think we have to do any work we don't want to do – Excuse me I have to cough. still working through a cough post COVID. –

I don't shame people who are like, “this is not a priority for me right now. I do not want to work on this. I think hypothetically I could be non monogamous or polyamorous, or I have sustainably been in the past. And right now. It's just work I don't want to do”. I think there's value in that too, in terms of being able to name that. being able to not assign morality to that, like ‘you're a bad person if you don't want to do this work’. I don't really talk with that kind of outlook. – For example. I left the cult that I was in in 2007. and it was 2018 when I was finally willing to do therapy on it. anybody could have said, “well, you don't want to or you're not ready to do this work. So you're running, you're avoiding you're –”, I wasn't willing yet. And people could want that for me, and people could be frustrated with me, and be nudging me, and I wasn't willing yet. it takes the time that it takes, if it winds up being something that you want to do. I think the most important thing when it comes to polyamory is just managing the expectations of everyone around us. if we are on the fence, or if we are feeling done or approaching being done, or “I could see in six months if it doesn't get easier I could be done”. Having open dialogue about that. not completely catching someone off guard with that, because when we are building interdependent relationships, people are relying on us, people are hoping we are in this with them. So if we are questioning if we want to do that work – short or long term – can we have that be an open conversation and not just ruminate on that in private and then present it to people who might be affected by that change.

That said, it gets harder before it gets easier. all change – it gets, it feels worse before it feels better, in my experience, if it is going to feel better. not all change is “good” or feels better. sometimes the move is to power through. So it really depends on what you're doing, I suppose. I'm always a little unsure of how to speak to very broad prompts. Okay, but I hope that's helpful.

All righty, next question. “How do you stay optimistic in dating? I'm a bi woman who's feeling really sick of trying to date men. I'm always the one doing the hard work. I'm always the one told I'm expecting too much, where they ghost or straight up ignore me when I try to say how I want to be treated. I've tried softening or phrasing things differently. I've tried needing less, but I'm exhausted by begging for the bare minimum. How do you stay motivated to meet new people and not just totally give up?”

Oooh I feel that. And I believe you. and I'm so sorry you felt the need to shrink in that way. I believe that you want to build these relationships, and have been met with unwillingness, or inability, or unwillingness that pretends to be inability, from the people you're trying to get close to. that kind of imbalance in emotional labor can be

soul sucking. It's very common for people who try to collaborate with men or similar to non white people trying to collaborate emotionally with white people. I think the more that the world is built for a person, on average, the less tolerance they tend to have for being uncomfortable, especially emotionally. is my hot take on that. And being a white cis person, right? so I think it is risk/reward. I've had people tell me, "I don't know you yet. And also, I'm just not fucking with white people right now". And I'm like, "fair." right? so I would imagine a similar feeling towards cis men or straight men, cis straight men, of just "the demographic on the whole, I've been feeling the risk is too high. I'm not ready to risk feeling that exhausted again. Even if you aren't a person who would do that to me, just the concept of it is something I don't want to engage with" and, fair, right? To not take it as an insult or an attack. But just Yeah, it's it's a thing.

And it's not, it's not just women. This past week, I was supporting a queer man that I care about. Because he's been getting misogynistic comments in response to some men that he knows. He's just saying, "hey, can you just treat me with a little bit more respect?" And they say shit like, "okay, dear" or "Yeah mom, sure". And feminize him, and then insult him based off that premise. Like, "you want to have a conversation about respect, and emotion so therefore, you're a nagging woman". It's wild whenever I see that. And so it's just, you're not imagining it, I guess is my point. And I know you know that. But in case a refresher helps of "this is a systemic issue, it's fair to have exhaustion".

All that to say, it is rough out there, and you don't have to do anything you don't feel like doing. that also doesn't mean necessarily that we have to give up companionship, if we aren't wanting to get close to a certain kind of person anymore, or right now, or whatever. Because can companionship, can commitment, can even sex, exist in friendships? or whatever you'd like to call them. there's a lot of ways to build a life with people. are there safer relationships that you feel fulfilled by? does there have to be a pursuit of this kind of relationship? Not to say that there's not grief or frustration of imagining one kind of dynamic and just continuing to hit your head on the wall with it. You know, that's, that's fair. And also, I don't think letting go, short or long term of that pursuit...

– Sorry my dog is trying to open the door. But I locked him out. –

I don't think letting go of the pursuit of one kind of relationship means we need to let go of everything that could go with it. I cuddle with my friends, I like to have hours long chats with my friends. can your needs be met another way?

In terms of not giving up, I would ask what does "giving up" mean? is it not giving up on finding companionship? In which case what are all of the ways that you can have

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that need met? Is it not giving up on your standards? not letting other people's low bar force you to lower your own? can we name what success or failure is? because if success is a close relationship, romantic or sensual – it's, again, fair to want that but ok – if that's what success is, then is there compromise that you don't really want to make? Is that necessitating it? are you putting up with comments, are you doing more of pulling teeth, do you find yourself doing this over and over and over again? Then it sounds like a close relationship on those terms would not feel like a success. So is that how we're still defining success? Because if success is to be treated well in a reciprocal loving relationship, okay, maybe we are giving up that type of pursuit, because we don't want to tolerate mistreatment. But there are a lot of reciprocal loving relationships. I guess is my thing. it's a relationship anarchistic approach, doesn't have to be romantic and sensual in nature. But I hear that frustration. I've been there.

I will say one more thing in terms of staying optimistic. I'm personally in a position where the few straight men that I interact with much anymore, it's usually in this kind of setting. So it's a bit filtered, any straight dudes that I talk to, they want to do better. They see women as adults, and non binary people is valid. they value emotional labor and domestic labor. And so while that is skewed, because of the bias of my work, I also do keep optimism because I do see that. a lot of people are wanting to be the best version of themselves. And, I empathize a lot, if you're sick of trying to find those specific people. I take breaks, I take breaks, I'm on a break from dating right now. I'm just doing too much other stuff that I want to prioritize my time.

Okay, so since we started a few minutes late, I will go a few minutes over. And I will address this one last comment in the chat as well. If you have any closing quickie questions, or things you'd like to say, I'm happy to take that into account in the next five to seven minutes.

So in the chat as a follow up for D/S question earlier: "I'm a submissive partner in a relationship with two dom partners. Both are some degree of 24/7 authority transfer. Have you seen this situation before? special considerations I can make as a sub hinge to balance, which don't necessarily exist on a hierarchy?" So yeah, and they're acknowledging that again, I'm not really equipped to speak with authority on D/S kink dynamics.

But being a hinge partner, I try to avoid triangulation. I don't know how that winds up looking for you, or what the specific points of tension are. If there's points of tension between these two partners, like, "No, I'm the authority" and they have conflicting authority. I don't know if that's how that's winding up looking. but being the hinge, even though the sub, you are still the more powerful person in terms of

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you have the ability to negotiate both relationships. and so that – don't overlook that. and in whatever terms, even if it's a container in which you negotiate these 24/7 dynamics, are you bringing to the table all of your commitments and all of your people's needs and concerns? we don't wanna pit partners against each other and say, “well, this partner would prefer I do this and you want something different.” Just as an example. We don't want to frame it to them, like “this partner wants this, and this person wants that, and I'm in the middle so I don't know what to do”, maybe there is that discomfort, it can often be a little bit more productive to take that unknown and that discomfort to an unbiased or less biased third party to digest it and process it with. Often our partners aren't the ones that we sort of weigh our options, because they are directly impacted by it. really depends on what you're talking about. And then just really owning whatever decision you want to make, even if it benefits one at the expense of another.

If it's – like we were talking about earlier, with this idea of equal resources making equality. it's not like that when it's your own choice with your own relationship that you want to negotiate. So if somebody wants a weekend with you, and the other person wants the same weekend with you, and you want that weekend with the first person, then that is a decision. “I would rather not have this weekend with you” to the second person. Not, “this person wants that weekend”. A lot of times, it's in the framing of how we are describing our choices and our agreements, and how that implies power dynamics. that can go a long way in terms of satisfaction levels, and whether or not partners feel competitive with each other.

Being a hinge, I'm a sub myself. in terms of decision making in the structures, even if you aren't doing the decision making, if you've outsourced that, you still have the ability to bring one partner's needs into the decision making and factor that in. in a way that your other partner wouldn't. then to own that power, and negotiate accordingly. Not unlike if you had two different jobs, right? if we take it out of a romantic or sensual context, 2 different jobs, 2 different bosses, as a role. And if one person is asking you to agree to a set of things you're going to do, and that's going to cause issues with this other job over here. Can I now ask for something that would make both things work for me? so I don't know if that's a helpful way to look at it. Often that's how I look at it. It's still owning your role, but also only owning your power in negotiation. But yeah, if that doesn't fit in with your 24/7 D/S, I'm totally open to that, too. I have some areas of this that, yeah, I don't have a breadth of knowledge on.

Okay. Well, I think that is all of our questions. And now, we reached the five minutes, thank you for bearing with me in the beginning with figuring out this new setup. I think it will lead to higher quality videos on the back end for replay. I'm really, really

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grateful for you. This is how I pay my bills. And so you are directly supporting me, you are directly feeding me. And I hope that my work is feeding you back.

Requests are welcome anytime for my longer form content. Stay tuned for some more video analysis. And of course, I'll do these Lives every five to six weeks or so as well. But yeah, I hope you have a beautiful day. I hope you have a beautiful rest of your week. And I'll see you later. Bye

xxx