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So, I have questions that were sent to me in email, and then DM, and as well I invite anyone who is here, if you have a question, you can drop it in the chat. Otherwise, I'll go to other people's questions.

All right, question number one, "I'm shifting the relationship because my partner doesn't want to see me as much as I want to see them." I'm imagining the question there is like, "how do you cope with that?"

And that can be really hard, if that is what the question is. I have a video on my Patreon called Coping with rejection. Because it is markedly different when we are the ones that are being told, "I don't want anything with you" that or "I don't want the thing with you that you want with me", rather than being the ones expressing that. It can be a powerless feeling. There can be grief, there can be some sort of disorientation. Like, "I usually like how you reflect back to me, my own presence, but now you're saying, in my mind, I'm hearing, I'm not good enough for that, or I'm not desirable enough for that," and it can really twist us. So I think it's really important to know that this rejection doesn't define you, it doesn't mean that you are not wanted consistently or you're not wanted more by other people. It is one person's desire. And it does not mean that you are not desirable, if that makes sense. So that's something that I think is really important.

There can be an impulse to change the person's mind. I don't really think that that goes great. Because, even if you wind up getting them to comply and say, "Okay, fine, I'll do it." If it's genuinely not what they want, then you will feel it. When you're spending time together, you can tell if they don't want to be there, and so I try not to force anything into fruition just because I imagined the picture would make me feel good. I try not to change their mind, even though that impulse is very strong, and it is – part of grief is bargaining, and trying to find a way that could happen still.

As well, does any part of you want this also? I think it is something that is really important to ask when we're being rejected, I think it's really important to know that it is not, just just our partner, that is maybe having a reason for wanting to pull away. So even though we're the ones being asked to not move forward. I don't know, if we sit with it, we think about it, would that actually be what we want to? would that actually be something that would serve us too? So finding acceptance is a path that, it's different for everybody. We just have to rely on our support. And we've got to know we are worth, and our time is worth, being with people who are so excited to be there. and being with people who absolutely want to share that time and space

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with us. And so to not keep pursuing somebody who is saying that they don't want that, even though it's really hard.

Okay, so question two. "how to deescalate a relationship from long term primary partners? the structure no longer serves us."

Actually, this is sort of related to the first question of adding distance. I also have a video on my Patreon – adding distance without breaking up – which essentially is like part of a deescalation. I think I have a deescalation tag or a restructuring tag on my posts, that you could see related posts. Yeah, I mean, I think it's really helpful to do kind of like an autopsy on the previous version of the relationship, like "why are we doing this? Why is it no longer serving us? Why do we want to add space or change the ways in which we're interacting?" that can just be helpful to know our motivations and to know, "oh, this is causing harm or stress, or this isn't what somebody wants. so what is the inverse of that? what could be additive?" So I find it's easier to decide what we're going to do next if we're very clear on what we don't want to do right now.

So yeah, kind of examining why is it that we want this distance. You might want to slow the pace or the frequency of interactions, you might want to remove certain conversation topics right? Like if we are not in this primary status anymore, or if we are pulling back and trying to change – What is too much information? What is appropriate for me to know? Where are the new boundaries and the new lines? So I don't cross them. what conversation topics might be strange? what kinds of interactions might be strange now? if there's any kind of interaction that felt associated with primacy of like, this is our one special thing, should we maybe not do that right now? because we want to avoid confusion, when we're restructuring, we want to make sure that we are not going to fall back into old patterns, at least for the short little bit. I often will maybe go on long breaks with somebody, depending on the relationship, I might go on a long break, or I might really pare down the ways that we're interacting to kind of hit a reset. That's my particular approach. But yeah, deciding together what would be confusing. So that it's not blurry, so that we're not calling it something different, but doing the same shit, if that makes sense.

And sometimes that can involve removing vulnerability, too. Sometimes it can involve removing sensuality, so there are different degrees. And there can be different stakes. Sometimes a restructuring conversation is pretty evenly desired. And it feels lower stakes. But this person's changing from a more hierarchical position, from a primary position. So that could feel very high stakes. we want a support network in place, we don't want our partner to be our sole person that we're relying on. maybe before they were the main person you talk to about polyamory

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and stressors and stuff. So we just want to make sure that our friendships and mentorships and community access just feels really solid, especially during periods of change... all the time, but especially during periods of change.

Okay, so I welcome anyone who's here to drop questions in the chat if you want. Otherwise, I'll continue with my questions here. Okay. Next question. "How can I communicate about my non belief in the romantic / platonic binary without imposing it?"

I was actually talking about this on Instagram, a little bit over the last few days. I say, I don't really subscribe to romantic / platonic binary, and people ask "so what does that mean?" which I appreciate. we want to know how theory turns into practice, we want to know – "What the hell does that mean though?" For me, it means, we've been trained to be putting people in these boxes and categorizing them, "you are a romantic partner, which means now I do this kind of thing with you." I escalate in this direction, on and on. you might have greater access to me, greater intimacy, a lot of things are implied by being in this box. And then if we want to say "someone is just friends", we put them in this box, and we say, "Okay, now we don't desire these things with each other anymore." And it's not usually all black and white.

We can decide what we do and don't do. But in terms of, not really believing in the binary – I've had candlelight dinners with some of my close friends that I don't feel romantically attracted to. or I might have moments of, "Oh, you're so beautiful in the candlelight", and then it's fleeting, and then it's gone. I have had long stretches of non intimacy with romantic partners of just, not really desiring sensuality, or sexuality, not really desiring touch together. But we are "partners". There can be casual sex with an acquaintance, we feel very friendly, but then we're doing some of the things that are usually in the romantic partner box. all of that. I think if we take a look at what the relationships literally look like, what they are literally doing, then we'll see it is fluid. It already is fluid. And so I'm just putting a name to it that I don't believe in that binary, I think there can be fluidity and sometimes that can take some pressure off. And that can also avoid delegitimizing the power of friendship, the power of aromantic or asexual relationships being incredibly intense, you can have really strong life partnerships that don't subscribe to the normal mononormative path. So, just continuing to question, "why do I use these labels?" I think labels can sometimes be helpful shorthand to manage people's expectations. But I think labels are all flawed. And if we just rely on the label to do the heavy lifting, "you are just friends now", that is so loaded, what does that mean? And can we talk about that? So everybody will define for themselves what those words mean. But it's important to talk to the people in our lives about that.

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Okay, next question, from the chat. "I was not poly but went on a date with an enm person. We decided not to have sex because we were really attracted to each other and wanted something long term. He's partnered. We ended up going separate ways because I felt unsure. Like do I need a partner first then date other people? Brand new here. Now that I've expressed my doubts he wants space."

Welcome, I'm so glad that you feel comfortable coming here. I relate to it a lot. I was definitely in that position, or in the early days, 10 or 11 years ago. I mean, in terms of the part of the question that's like, "do I need a partner first?" No. plenty of single people are polyamorous, plenty of people who have short term or non integrated non "serious" (going to the previous question), plenty of people have a variety of friendships or long distance connections, that wouldn't really look like a primary partnership. and that can be valid in non monogamy. So I understand coming from monogamy, it's really the only frame of reference, the only model we've been shown is this dyad centric thing, right? So two people, that is the "main" relationship, and then polyamory adds other people. you don't have to be limited in that, in terms of connecting with other people.

If somebody has a primary partner, and they use that kind of language, if they have a long term partner, either way, there will be some asymmetries of privilege, some advantages and perks or the absence of struggle that the other partner has that you might experience. Stress of being new – not just new in the relationship but new to non monogamy – insecurities about novelty versus longevity, etc. And it's just important to be able to talk about that with whoever you're dating, like, "Hey, I'm insecure about this, or I don't feel right about this." And you'll get a sense of, are they invested in helping you feel secure? Because a lot of times, if people are still latched on to that dyad centric idea of "this is my main person", then they can act like they're the only one that really matters, or "their needs are my priority by default. And if you have needs, well, that's an inconvenience to me, or maybe I'll deal with it, maybe not," you know? I just see it as really important in vetting a person, regardless of how that relationship winds up looking: do they give a shit about you feeling secure? And do they give a shit about naming power dynamics, especially if you're at a disadvantage in the power dynamic? Are they talking about what that looks like in practice? What can you expect from them? How will they communicate? what kinds of connections are you making? Are there ceilings to what you can build with this person?

We need to have these practical conversations, just so we know what the hell we're doing. Because it is a designer relationship, it is a build-your-own-path, which means it needs to be intentionally built. Otherwise, it can messily meander and feel really chaotic. So if you've expressed doubts about the structure, and he's saying he wants

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space, then that's good information. At the expression of discomfort or, not being sure, he's not here for that, right? And he's not trying to support you in that or talk through it or, so it's better to know that now than if you were trying to build something with him. We need our partners to be our teammates, in mindfully constructing something. I know it can be overwhelming. You don't have to know what kind of polyamory you want. But you can at least know what you don't want. And know some red flags, to try to try to go towards people who are acting in good faith.

Okay, next question. "I'm in a new long distance relationship. And I can tell my nesting partner is struggling with this, but is not willing to talk about it. He's saying he will get used to it, but the distance between us is making me anxious. I'm hierarchical polyamory."

So I think what jumps out to me in this question is – he's not willing to talk about it. I would just be curious then of why. if he's saying, "I don't want to talk about it, I'll just get used to it" – I empathize with not having the words, I empathize with feeling avoidant. But before we can talk about it, we have to talk about what's getting in the way of us talking about it. before we can actually deal with the thing, we have to deal with what the blocks are to dealing with the thing. and that can be a big endeavor in and of itself, but to just be asking why and hopefully there will be some version of that question that he would be willing to participate in. If you're completely being stonewalled, and he's not interested in having conversations at all. It will be tough to really get to a feeling of security and openness and transparency, right? Because there will be this elephant in the room of something that's not being addressed. Like, "Why are you not wanting to talk? Is there some way I can make this feel like an easier environment for you to say how you feel? is there something I'm doing that it feels like a lift to tell me that?" So all of that is, I think, valuable. how do our partners process tough feelings? And how can we make sure they see us as a teammate, and that they would include us in that? but there can be a variety of ways that people don't want to talk about it.

Moving past that to the whole idea of getting comfortable with a long distance partner. I mean, being hierarchical, I'm personally not, I don't have a lot of tools for constructing a hierarchy, just because that's not the way that I practice. I can talk about maintenance or harm reduction. But intentionally building hierarchy is not really something that I have a lot of life experience with. but I think, in general, if somebody is a secondary, just knowing "what does that mean? What are the limits? what are agreements that you have with your main partner, that could impact your secondary?" like, getting consent from a secondary includes informed consent, right? Not just "you're going to be a secondary", but literally, this is what it looks like.

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if your partner can say, "I don't want you to date them anymore." If your partner can decide when and how you interact with them. what are the power dynamics? And what would that look like in hypotheticals? I usually run through some hypotheticals and see if they're really actually okay with it. So that's from your new partners perspective. From your existing partners perspective, yeah, if he can get to a place where he can just voice or put words to what he is feeling tense about, or fearful of, then that will help you in figuring out what to do about it. But first, we need to be able to name it before we can find some solutions.

Okay, next question. "Do you know many cult survivors who are queer and poly? Do you see commonalities in our stories?"

Yeah, I've been asked a lot of cult questions lately. I think it's because I've just been referencing it here and there. Yeah, I... it's tough because if I'm visible if I'm saying "I survived a cult and here's how it affected me", that's going to attract more people that feel comfortable telling me that, so I think there's an exposure bias or whatever that's called. So I don't have any scientific studies saying how many polyamorous people have been in a cult, but I have met a lot of people who have some version of radical conditioning in their history – whether that was extreme religion, or something that was a bit more niche, which was my experience. That is usually an environment that you don't have a lot of, say in your life. there's very conditional love in those environments. And those conditions are like, "this is how you have to live. And if you don't live this way, then you can't have your community and you can't have your partners". And so yeah, I think non monogamy especially polyamory is a designer relationship, right? This is something that you have total agency to design every aspect of it and it is very liberating. a lot of us come out of those environments saying "I can't be controlled!" because we were 24/7 controlled. so maybe it has something to do with that. But I also think cults can attract people who are polyamorous because we want abundance, we love a lot of people, a lot of community and that can kind of happen in a cult. It's like an instant community. and so I'm not really sure – chicken or egg kind of thing. But it's really nice to be able to build your polyamorous network in a really intentional way where everybody maintains freedom to do whatever they want. And nobody is designing your life for you.

Alright, next question is "Have you ever dated someone monogamous while being polyamorous? and if so, was it hard?" I have dated somebody who's ambiamorous, meaning that they can love in a monogamous or non monogamous way. And that was tough. I personally don't start new relationships that are monogamous unless we've known each other for a lot of years. And I actually know that a mono / polyam connection would be fruitful, you know? But a lot of times, I just feel like it's too high

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Exclusive video: LIVE CHAT - March 2023

risk for me personally. But I did date somebody who's ambiamorous, we had a four year relationship. He was my tattooer and we became close friends. And yeah, it was really lovely and beautiful. And the whole time, he actually had a primary partner at one point, while I was actively trying to shift into non hierarchical / anti hierarchical space. And so there were a lot of – if you just look at the labels – incompatibilities. he might go back to monogamy, he has somebody who has power over me when I'm trying to undo that in my life. But he was also kind of grandfathered in. And there was a little bit more flexibility, and a lot more of a collaboration. I knew his other partner, and she was super sweet. everybody was really a team player in this. but he and she wound up breaking up and he started dating for a year or so. And he was like, “well, now I'm not really sure. what if I want monogamy again? What does this mean for us?” And I said, “Well, if you want monogamy with me, that probably would be unfulfilling for you.” Because it was also a long distance relationship, and I wasn't able to give him a lot of things. “So if you want monogamy again, it probably means it'll be with someone else. And, I imagine that wouldn't happen overnight, right? so just keep me in the loop. let me know when you think this person is important to you. And then when you have that first seed of an idea of having monogamy with this person. to include me in the thought process. It will be hard and it will be sad. But I want you to have what you want in your life. I love you and I want you to have what you need. And I would much rather keep you in my life in some kind of capacity, even if it's not romantic or sexual, than have this be the hill that I die on.”

So yeah, he wound up meeting somebody and deciding that monogamy was where he landed on it. And it was six months of conversation, he included me every step of the way. So I felt really respected, I felt really gently eased into it. And that I think made a huge difference. it really makes a difference when a partner includes you in a hard decision. “I'm thinking of doing this” rather than announcing a decision has been made and it's non negotiable. Those are two very different experiences. So, yeah, we wound up ending that relationship. so there was grief, of course, but it was the same grief that you get with any kind of breakup. And he's a lovely person. So, anyway, I don't know if that's applicable to every situation. But I think, as long as everybody gives a shit about everybody else, and nobody's being selfish, I think there are ways to find sustainability or to evolve in a loving fashion.

Okay, next question. “I'm grateful to be learning about non hierarchy from you, that seems totally out of reach to me. Any thoughts on how to know if you're ready to move towards non hierarchy? And what questions to ask yourself?”

Sure. I mean, I was terrified too because, at least for me, non-monogamy was so new. So I thought, “Well, hierarchy is the closest kind of...” it seemed adjacent to monogamy. And so I could wrap my head around that right? And as I was starting to

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Exclusive video: LIVE CHAT - March 2023

unpack a lot of insecurities, I realized “I feel like I have my sense of safety in this relationship linked to a feeling of primacy. And so therefore, if I lose that status, I'm losing my safety.” And so it became a lot about – do I want to root my safety in something different? Do I want to root it in trust of my partner rather than status of myself over somebody? and I'm just sharing my personal experience, everybody's will look different. But yeah, in terms of knowing when I was ready to move towards non hierarchy, I just started experiencing relationships. It felt weird and wrong to put people I cared about under another person. I just felt like “I can't... I don't want my partner to be able to tell this other partner what to do. I don't want to say we can't go on vacation together or we can't have intense escalation in our relationship because of another person.” It just felt really inorganic to me. And so that's when I started to discover I don't love in a hierarchical way. I realized “I think I'm forcing this structure because of my fear.”

So, it's work. But I wound up spending a lot of time with people who are deconstructing hierarchies. I'm starting to say anti hierarchy rather than non hierarchy, because I don't think hierarchy's something you ever stop having in your head. like, “oh, shit, I just fell back into thinking you were the most important because I've known you the longest,” that kind of thing still happens to this day. It is in our social conditioning and our programming. but anti hierarchy is more of an intentional desire to deconstruct having anyone have power over anyone else.

And you can absolutely have asymmetries. I spend like 90-95% of my time with one partner at the moment, because one is long distance, and I'm just dating casually. And so there's a big asymmetry, but everybody's fine. And also, at any point that somebody feels harmed by that, they have equal amounts of agency to speak up and say “I don't feel good. are there other options?” whereas in a hierarchy, if that was a secondary, they wouldn't have that power. And they could feel oppressed by that, or really upset by that. So, to keep asking questions, keep reading things. keep looking inward at what feels sustainable for you long term. And you will continue to gather information as you go. a lot of it is like gathered in the field. I think I couldn't talk myself into it intellectually, or read enough theory to convince myself to change a structure. I had to experience loving people, and experience what felt organic and inorganic. So I don't know if that helps.

Next question. “How would you deal with a crush on a metamour who doesn't want to date couples?”

Oh, okay. I see, a meta who would be turned off by dating two people in a dyad. Yeah, I mean, if they feel the ick at that, in any way, shape, or form, that's disappointing. but I think it could be helpful to remember that three people who date each other, it

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Exclusive video: LIVE CHAT - March 2023

doesn't have to be a triad. A triad is 4 relationships, A-B, B-C, A-C, and ABC, right? And so you don't have to have the ABC. I can date you and I can date them, and we don't have to be a single unit. it will be complex, it will be navigating a lot of boundaries that you might not normally have around metamours, around what you share with who because things can get blurry. like "I share everything with my partner, but it's about somebody that we both date so what's too much information here? what's appropriate and inappropriate?" And so a lot of getting into the nitty gritty of where the line should be.

So that could be sort of clarified of, "I'm not pitching a triad to you, you don't have to date us as a unit. I would just like to go on a date with you or have something with you independent of that person." And they could still say, "Nah, that still feels a little too messy to me." A lot of people have bad experiences with unicorn hunting, and so they could just be not interested in the concept, even if you've done nothing wrong. But yeah, I think it's important to distinguish that just because you date somebody else, that doesn't mean you as a unit have to be dated.

Okay. "What to do about the paradox between pact practicing RA and power exchange dynamics and kink?"

Okay, so it really depends who it is. what are the power exchange dynamics? are they contained to scenes? Is it a 24/7 D/S relationship? what are the bounds here? but, in general, while dom/sub is somebody holding power, or directing somebody, that power exchange can be revoked at any time, right? And so I don't see it as incompatible with RA, because that is not actually giving up power. you're agreeing to submit, but you still maintain the agency to be like, "Okay, I'm done doing that now." Whereas if you're actually in a hierarchy, you wouldn't be able to stop doing that, you wouldn't be able to change or restructure it from the bottom up. but in terms of practicing RA, If I'm dating someone who has a 24/7 D/S dynamic, and their dom is telling them to do things that would then infringe on what I am able to do with them, that could be something that I talk about. "hey, I feel awkward about this." And then they could choose to discuss that with their dom and renegotiate. So there's a lot of negotiation that can go into it. There's a lot of delicate navigating of people's sensitivities. There's a lot of people who are not kink aware, who can enter a polycule and not really get what's happening, and maybe even project things onto you. I've been called sick and wrong and bad for the kink that I do. "But nobody's getting hurt, so I don't get it." I think it really comes down to – do you all feel like you can negotiate solutions that would meet everybody's needs? which can be inclusive of somebody dominating another person in a contained way. But I'm not a sex educator or a kink educator, can only speak from my experience.

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Exclusive video: LIVE CHAT - March 2023

Okay. Next question. "Do you find that you need to do a lot of emotional processing as a polyamorous person?"

Um, if emotional processing... I guess I wonder what those words mean to you? Like, does that imply heavy lifting? Does that imply a lot of intensity? Because yeah, every day we feel emotions, we feel annoyance here, we feel hope there. And so everybody comes home at the end of the day, "how was your day?" that's processing emotion. just to draw attention to the fact that it's not the nature of polyamory that brings emotion into our life, we are emotive human beings. work and children and other relationships can be similarly as stressful or relaxed as polyamory.

So yeah, I mean, it depends on what your polyamory is currently doing. are you going through a big period of change? Is there a lot of conflict? then yeah, there would be a disproportionate amount of emotional processing as to the norm. And in the beginning, I'd say in the first couple of years, there was a lot of trauma recovery that I was going through. And I think that's common for a lot of people who are newer, because non monogamy can be really activating for people, and so confronts you with your trauma. "Well, I guess I have to deal with this or stop doing it," at least that was my experience. And so it did feel a bit more intense in the beginning, but that was more related to the work that I needed to do on myself and on my past that wasn't related to polyamory necessarily. But it's gotten a lot more relaxed. that's kind of why I named the account and the work that I do is as "chill polyamory" – not chill in the sense of like, "Cool Girl, I have no feelings", no – chill in the sense of, "it can actually be relaxed, it can actually be not stressful." And I want that to be normalized. it doesn't always have to be sensational. It doesn't always have to be intense. So I guess, that's a long way to say, I don't have as many conflicts anymore. if I do have conflicts, they're resolved a lot faster. I have a lot more tools. I feel a lot of security. So in polyamory where I'm at now, I don't think it's disproportionate emotional processing as anywhere else.

Okay, next question. "Anything about poly life that you still can't get over, or get the hang of?"

Well, I haven't experienced every situation. I think that's kind of what's cool about long term non monogamy. I've talked to people who are non monogamous for 30 years, and then they're just entering a triad for the first time, and so they feel "new" again. like "I've never done this version of this. I have tools, I have some frames of reference, I have friends maybe who've done it, but I feel like struggling or I'm bad. I don't know how this looks for me". And so that's in perpetuity, we're always growing. In terms of where I currently am at, I don't have blocks really around polyamory in the ways that it works for me. But if I were to start dating somebody or several

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somebodies in a structure that I've never dated before, I would probably struggle with common hurdles. I think that's the most important thing, is we never reach a destination of "I'm done and I know all the poly things and I'm a poly superhero". I actually heard somebody use that the other day, "I thought you were a poly superhero. Why are you struggling?" And I was like, "just because I'm a fucking human being". we can't pedestalize longtime polyamorous people because we're humans that have not experienced every way shape or form of what it means to interact with people in this world. And so there will be struggles with something new, which is kind of the value and the beauty of meeting new people and trying new things. we don't want to feel like we've got it all figured out. That would be boring.

Okay, next question. "I'm finding it hard to find partners who are very informed about poly and I'm in NYC, I send them to you as a resource. Do you find you do a lot of educating partners or just find educated poly people?"

That's really tough. Yeah, I mean, most major cities have meetups. I lived in New York for 10 years. And there were a lot of kink meetups, polyamory meetups, very hit or miss, you know? Because we're groups of people that might not normally mix, and maybe polyamory is the only thing we have in common. and or maybe like go, and people are nice, but you're not really into anybody. But it can be frustrating anywhere to find connections, because it's hard to find close friends. It's hard to find partners. Straight monogamous people struggle dating. But it does shrink the dating pool to be non monogamous. I personally don't educate partners anymore, just because this is now my profession. And that would feel really weird. But I think maybe about year four, year five, if I was dating somebody who's year one, I would work with them or offer them coping tools around if they're struggling with their other partner. "oh, have you ever tried this? this might be helpful".

But in terms of educating someone on how to take care of me? I mean, it depends. am I teaching them what my boundaries are? Because I would have to teach that to anybody. Or, am I trying to tell them why it's not okay to just like, hook up with somebody new and not tell me? am I trying to teach them about the baseline ethics that we share? Because that would be an exhausting endeavor. And there are a lot of people who use polyamory in a way that I don't. So there's usually a lot of questions like, "what does that mean for you?" there's a lot of people who could maybe better use the term swinging, or open relationship... Again, with labels, I always interrogate "what does that look like? what's your normal average month look like on the calendar?"

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I think when I am making connections, a lot of times I go to spaces where there's a lot of overlap. I am personally kinky. And so there are a lot of overlap with kink and polyamory. going to rope tying classes, I've met people, going to dungeons I've met people. But beyond that, there's a lot of overlap with gaming communities, a lot of gamers, a lot of tabletop, d&d, things like that. I've met people that way. And dating apps, unfortunately. Feeld is a bit more geared towards non traditional ways of life. OKCupid has a non monogamy filter, I think Tinder just started using a non monogamy filter. But I don't put more energy into meeting new people than I'm willing to lose in a week. I'm just like, "if every one of these interactions goes wrong, and is exhausting, would I be depleted at the end of the week?" So, how much time am I willing to have go poorly? And that way, there can still be maintaining some balance. But it's hard. I think it's hard for everybody. A lot of people don't go to therapy. A lot of people don't work on themselves. We can just try our best.

Okay, so next question. "How to handle when a partner breaks expectations that were previously discussed?"

I have a personal story that I can share about this. This week, actually, I was the one who broke expectations with a partner. Basically, a lot of queer dating can be unsure, like "I don't know if this is a date." and so it's hard, it can be hard to manage expectations. and usually my mode of operation will be, "let me just say the most extreme version of how I imagine this could go." If they wanted to have sex, would I be open to that? If it's just coffee, no big deal. But if I say It's just coffee, and then we wind up having sex, then it's a big deal. So I wind up trying to under promise / over deliver, that type of thing. And then that can also be a way to plan for spontaneity. understanding the boundaries of the people in our life and, so then, within that framework, what can I be spontaneous around without hurting anybody?

But this week, I was meeting somebody I'd never met before, a work acquaintance from the other side of the world. and just happened to be visiting Berlin and I didn't particularly feel attracted to them. we had never had that kind of flirty vibe. And so I went to meet up with them. And I told the partner that I live with "I really think this is just gonna be an interaction that is mostly talking shop, or mostly professional, and we'll have a drink or two, and then I'll probably come home". And then as the night went on, there started to be this charge. there started to be this intensity, and I wound up texting the partner that I live with, because we share responsibilities for our dogs. "hey, I'm going to be home a little bit later for the walk for the dogs. Just a heads up," and I didn't really share that the nature of what was happening was altering. So he still had in his mind, we're just meeting as colleagues. And so then a couple of hours later, I texted and I was getting pretty tipsy. "Hey, would it be really annoying to do a solo walk with the dogs tonight? I know I said I'd be coming home, I

just want to check in with you because this turned out to be something very different. I might even want to go home with them.” And it put that partner in a tricky position. Because he's like, “Well, I'm never going to tell you what to do. Yeah, I'd be annoyed, I'd be annoyed because I would have planned differently for my night if this was how it was gonna go. And so I would have preferred to know that upfront. But if you want to go home with them, I'll deal with it, I want you to do whatever you want to do.” And so I said, “I think I would like to go home with them.”

But then the next day, there wound up being this sort of feeling of resentment from him. “ I really felt like my expectations weren't managed in that.” And I was like, “Yeah, you're really right.” so that that can happen, no matter how rigorous you are, we can slip up, we can be sloppy, and it's a matter of – what do you do with it then? What is the response now? How are you going to make it right? Especially there might be sensitivity moving forward, around anybody that you broke expectations with. A partner could say “now I feel nervous around that person, that you won't take care of me when you're around that person,” so we really need to have more of a plan of how we are going to rebuild trust in this way, and around that person specifically?

From there, you can't always conjure up an environment where they have an opportunity to demonstrate, “I'm not going to break expectations this time”, but you can have a plan in place to rebuild trust. Now, if it becomes a pattern, that's different. if it becomes a pattern, that's a problem, and would need to be addressed. But I think it's really important to allow each other grace, depending on the context. we're going to be human, we're going to accidentally hurt each other, or be drunk or have a selfish fleeting moment, that's gonna happen sometimes.

Okay. Next question. “I'm new to polyamory. I have a girlfriend boyfriend, and I'm jealous my girlfriend could get to know someone else. She says she loves only me. how to deal?”

Okay, so I understand the fear. and honestly, this happens in long term polyamory as well. It might be a bit more frequent and a bit more intense early on. But we can get into a routine with our partners, we really like the flow of how things are going, we feel safe and secure in this model, and now they feel really intense with somebody else. Maybe they want to move in with somebody else, or have a kid with somebody else. I think this is applicable to pretty much any type of polyamory because we can get fearful like, “what if they want to do X with someone else? and what would that mean for me and would I lose what we have?” Just continue to talk about it, I think.

If your girlfriend – speaking to the question – if your girlfriend is saying she loves only you, is that an attempt to reassure you? I'm wondering, what is making her use that

exclusivity? What is making her promise that she only loves you? Because I personally, in my experience, I can't promise that I will only love this number of people, right? I can't promise how I will feel, I can promise how I will act. And I can promise what I will say or do. I can promise boundaries, all of that. but I can't promise how I'm going to feel. it can be really hard to root your feeling of emotional security in somebody's emotional state. because that can't be predicted or controlled. if we could control how we feel, that would make life a lot easier. So yeah, I'm wondering if there can be a conversation about that. is that a remnant of mononormativity? of like, "let me reassure you by saying that you're the one and only, even within polyamory"? I think that's dangerous territory, that could set you up for disappointment at the least or heartbreak at the most, when inevitably, an emotion that they can't control or that they're even surprised by pops up.

So instead, really understanding – what is the jealousy? I had a video a month or two back on Instagram and Tiktok about, "what is jealousy?" Can we dissect it? Can we get more specific? Is there anger? Is there fear? Is there grief? Is it envy, you know? is it fear of missing out? there's a lot of different words that fall under the umbrella of jealous, and it can make it feel like this overwhelming feeling. How do I possibly deal with this? Because it's so vague, and can include all of these other emotions. And so if we can name it a bit more precisely, like, what is it I fear losing? do I fear being replaced? am I insecure that somebody will be more this / more that / better at this? Sometimes the other person becomes a mirror of our insecurities, and we project onto them everything that we think we're not. And so it's all just information. what is it that we're afraid of? What is it that we're angry about? Or grieving? And can we come up with a game plan with the people in our life? If somebody else happens to me, how can I take care of you in that? We don't want to say "you are better than them." We want to say "you're safe." And in monogamy, a lot of times those can be synonymous. But yeah, if we're not monogamous, we really want to be mindful to move away from that kind of language and just say, "How can I make you feel safe, regardless of how I feel about anybody else?" It's tough. Find people to talk to, who aren't related to the situation. I couldn't do any of this without people to talk to.

Okay, we got 10 more minutes. "How do you recover from heartbreak while trying to access love for your other partners?"

That's a really tough one. It will vary from person to person. But I think it's important to be able to have grief. And people grieve all the time and still go to work. People grieve all the time and still take care of their kids. we have commitments that if we don't do them, it could cause harm. So we really need to be able to name: "what are the commitments that are flexible?" that I could let go of, that I could free up some time to really deal with this sadness. And, "what are the commitments that would

cause harm if I didn't do them?" Having specificity on that can really help. If we're grieving, if we're sad, we can't always predict it. that can be a real roller coaster of emotions. Some days, we feel fine or numb. And some days, we're just wanting to stay in bed and cry all day. where is there flexibility to be gentle with ourselves on our grieving process? And where is there inflexibility of like, "okay, but please don't neglect me, please don't disappear for a month" etc. whatever that looks like, whatever your partner's needs are. that can all be negotiated.

There can maybe be a spectrum of, "if I'm having a really bad day, how would you feel if I do this? If I just like completely go no contact?" Or "if I'm having an okay day, then yes, I can go on a date with you. But I can't promise that I'll be feeling good that day." There can be several paths. "if A then B, if C and D. And let's check in the morning of and then I can tell you if I'm going to be in the headspace to love on you that day", you know? And if the answer is "no, actually, I want to stay in bed. I don't want to go on a date." Can you right then and there offer an alternative? "I can't go on a date tonight. I'd rather be alone. I'm really sad. And I can go on a date on that day. and even if I'm really sad, I still will show up." I think it can be helpful to still go – if it's the second or third or fourth reschedule – to still go and then at that point, we can have alternative date options. "If I'm feeling really light and free, maybe we go to the party, or maybe we go out dancing. if I'm feeling really sad, Is it cool if I'm just like curled up and we just watch a movie together?" there can be flexibility on how we engage with our partners, depending on our emotional state.

if you've experienced grief of any other kind... of losing somebody that you love, of going through a breakup and still showing up for your friends... we usually have some experience of navigating this outside of a non monogamous context, and we can pull on that. What worked, what didn't work, you know? But keep talking to the people in your life, what they need. And if they're like, "no, no, I don't need anything", that's not true. If they're worried about being a burden on you while you're sad, they still have needs. And we don't want to lay the groundwork for potential resentment. When you get to the other side of this and they feel like "you didn't take care of me for a long time." we want to be proactive and make sure that we are continuing to take care of the people in our lives. So, it's tailor made, it's hard to really speak in generalities on that because it really depends on all of the context. But yeah, I'd say that's what I could broadly put words to for that.

Okay, so we got five more minutes I'll probably do one more question. "Advice on how to repair a relationship with a former nesting partner, when I fell in love with a narcissist, self destructed, moved out, broke up with the narcissist and now I want to repair broken trust with the former nesting partner?"

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Okay, so you're saying that the narcissist was a different person. And you got wrapped up in that, hurt your nesting partner, and now you want to repair trust? Okay. I get that. I'm so sorry that you found yourself in that position. narcissists are charming, they're good at sweeping you off your feet. Not to take it at face value like – love bombing, or big grand gestures, a lot of times that is manipulative, and I push back on that. But the question being on how to repair trust?

I mean, it really depends on what harm was caused. I try to pinpoint and name the theme of the harm. if the theme of the harm is “you abandoned me, you neglected me, you said mean things to me,” – what is the general umbrella concept that the harm exists under? that can kind of point us in a direction of what repair would look like. Because repair is an active thing. Time doesn't heal all wounds, if we don't spend that time working on healing. The body heals passively with time, a lot of times, but relationships don't. And so if we don't do anything in that time, we're going to pick right back up from where we left off. And so what do we do?

Okay, so let's say, abandonment, inconsistency, dropping the ball, maybe that's what happened. so what is going to be the opposite of that? And that's if your former nesting partner wants to collaborate with you, right? They're going to have to want to accept your apology and want to rebuild trust. So what would the opposite of that harm be? If it was inconsistency, how can I demonstrate consistency? If there was a sense of abandonment, or selfishness, and not thinking of their needs, How can I proactively think of their needs, come up with a creative date, like pursue them, and really make sure that they are feeling loved and desired? Can we demonstrate the opposite of what we did? And can we do that consistently, it's not just about one time making it up. It's not about them saying the words “I forgive you”, it's about establishing a pattern of behavior that proves their fear wrong. it's about establishing a pattern of behavior that shows you take it seriously. you don't want to hurt them in that way anymore.

And so, it does sound like if you moved out for a person, that the stakes could feel high and it might take a long time to repair that. so you can collaborate and if the very big ways of demonstrating you're different now, if that is not accessible – because you want to take it really slow, for example – then what are tiny versions of how you can demonstrate consistency? Do you text them at the same time every day, or every week? whatever cadence you want. Is it that you show up even in the tiniest ways when you said you were going to show up? Is it that you proactively think of, “okay, I already know your coffee order. I went ahead and ordered it for you.” there can be tiny little ways that we're demonstrating the opposite. and that's why I think coming up with the general theme of what I did, can help me with finding all of the big and little ways that can work in opposition to that.

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Collaborate with them on what they feel open to doing. And you can propose, “would this feel better? How would this feel?” And you can decide together what to try. But yeah, for healing and rebuilding trust, we can take charge of that. we don't have to passively wait. In fact, I think it's better to not passively wait. So I hope that's helpful. It's always tough to say “this is what everybody should always do all the time.” It's all so tailor made.

If at any point, anybody that has asked these questions wants to have a one on one chat, I'm happy to go into a bit more nuance and detail with you on that. So, okay, well, thank you so much for being here. Thank you for all of the questions that were submitted. I'm really, really happy that you all feel safe coming to me. And yeah, I would love to know what else you want to talk about. I will upload this video later tonight or tomorrow. have a beautiful rest of the day. Have a beautiful week, and I will see you next week.

xxx