

GENEQ Polyamory

What is polyamory?

Polyamory is the desire, practice, or acceptance of having more than one loving, intimate relationship at a time, with the full knowledge and consent of everyone involved. Unlike cheating and adultery, all polyamorous relationships are characterized by honesty, open and frequent communication, and mutually agreed-upon boundaries. While some people briefly experiment with polyamorous relationships, many people identify as polyamorous for most of their lives.

Why are people polyamorous?

People are polyamorous for many different reasons. Some reasons include:

- o They want to have relationships with the people they love, even if they love more than one person.
- o They value having their range of needs and desires met by more than one partner.
- o They are involved in long-distance relationships and want intimacy while their partner is far away.
- o They want the stability of long-term relationships as well as the excitement of new relationships.

Polyamorous relationships vary widely in configuration, rules and boundaries, and gender and sexual orientation of those involved. Examples of possible configurations include:

- o One woman has long-term sexually-exclusive relationships with two heterosexual men. All three of them have agreed not to get involved with anyone else for the time being.
- o Two men, one woman, and one transgender person are all involved with each other. They have agreed that each of them can date new people without getting explicit permission from their partners first.
- o One woman has a very close relationship with another woman, who has less committed relationships with a man and a genderqueer person. The women have agreed that they can date other people, but they must get explicit permission before dating new people.

These are just some examples; there are many other configurations.

How is polyamory different from polygamy, open relationships, swinging, and hooking up?

Polyamory is a type of consensual non-monogamy, which is the practice of having multiple marital, sexual, and/or romantic partners at once. The boundaries between polyamory and other forms of consensual non-monogamy are fluid. However, polyamory generally encourages love, commitment, and communication among all partners.

Some other forms of consensual non-monogamy include:

- o **Polygamy** – someone is polygamous if he or she is married to more than one person at the same time. Historically, polygamy has most often been practiced as one man having multiple wives. In contrast, because polyamory values individual choice, women can have as much power to define their relationships as men do.
- o **Swinging** – Typically, swingers are married or committed couples who engage in sexual activities with people outside of their relationship.
- o **Open relationship** – People involved in open relationships have permission from their partners to engage in sexual activities with other people.
- o **Hooking up** – People who hook up have casual sex without expecting a relationship to develop. Hooking up is only a form of ethical non-monogamy if all parties involved are aware of and approve of the situation.

What are some challenges that polyamorous people face?

- **Jealousy.** While people in polyamorous relationships consent to their partners' involvement with other people, they may still feel jealous of these people. They often cope with or overcome their jealousy by establishing relationship rules and talking to their partners about their feelings to address their fears and insecurities.
- **Time management.** Because they must fulfill the needs of multiple partners, polyamorous people must be careful to spend adequate time with their partners. In order to do this, they often plan their interactions in advance.
- **Communication.** Because problems in one relationship may affect other relationships, it is vital that all people involved in polyamorous relationships communicate frequently about their feelings, needs, desires, and problems.
- **Educate yourself.** If there are things you don't know or understand about LGBTQ issues, do some research, ask questions or contact a group that deals with these issues.
- **Lack of cultural models.** Because polyamory falls outside the norm, our culture does not offer much guidance about how to have healthy polyamorous relationships. As a result, communication between partners is especially important.
- **Stigmatization and discrimination.** Polyamorous people are often misunderstood by mainstream society. As a result, they may be harassed, ridiculed, fired, or have their kids taken away.

How can I be respectful of polyamorous people?

- **Avoid making assumptions.** Like all people, polyamorous individuals come from many different backgrounds and have a wide range of relationship expectations, sex drives, and levels of maturity. Similarly, polyamorous relationships come in a variety of forms, with varying levels of commitment and involvement.
- **Realize that polyamorous people are not necessarily perpetually available.** Like everyone else, they only have a limited amount of time and energy, which limits the number of people they choose to be involved with.
- **Don't assume that polyamory can't work.** Just like monogamous people, polyamorous people face relationship problems. But many polyamorous relationships can be just as fulfilling and last just as long as monogamous relationships.
- **Don't "out" people.** Because they may face stigmatization, many polyamorous people do not express their polyamorous beliefs and practices to everyone. Respect their confidentiality and get permission before revealing to others that they are polyamorous.

Resources:

Websites:

FAQ about polyamory

<http://www.xeromag.com/fvpoly.html>

Polyamory livejournal community

<http://polyamory.livejournal.com>

FAQs, essays, books, mailing lists, and local events related to polyamory

<http://www.polyamory.org>

Polyamory-friendly list of professionals

<http://www.polychromatic.com/pfp/>

Books:

Opening Up

by Tristan Taormino

Open

by Jenny Block

The Ethical Slut

by Dossie Easton

Community mailing lists

sfbay-poly

Polyamory-related discussions and information about local polyamory-related events
<http://lists.polyamory.org/listinfo.cgi/sfbay-poly-polyamory.org>

under25-sfbay-poly

Polyamory-related discussions and information about local polyamory-related events for people 25 years old and under
<http://groups.google.com/group/under25-sfbay-poly>



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