

This article discusses when opening your relationship is likely to be successful.

Let me preface this writing by saying this: I don't favor monogamy or nonmonogamy. I do favor approaching new ideas with openness and curiosity, and nonmonogamy is best approached with an attitude of curiosity. It's important to note that most cultures and religions favor monogamy. Thus our expectations of relationship may be predisposed toward monogamy. Perhaps in considering other relationship structures you might learn something you can integrate into your existing or future relationship/s that will result in a more fulfillment. Those attached to marriage and monogamy may find this article surprising or alarming. Approach with curiosity.

## **When to “Open” Your Relationship or Become Polyamorous**

### **You might be interested in a different structure than monogamy:**

- You want to have multiple relationships and develop relationships on your terms
- You have the desire and capacity to have emotional and sexual intimacy with, and perhaps commit to, more than one partner.
- You want “more than sex” from your additional relationship.
- You would like to experience a different couple dynamic than monogamy
- You are interested in exploring your affinity for different genders or types of sex
- You believe another relationship might augment your existing couple life.

### **When to open your relationship:**

- When the couple feels like their relationship/marriage is going well
- A need in the couple may not be met (this may be one reason for opening the relationship), but the unmet need is not crucial to the well-being of the couple.
- When both partners are interested in discussing and exploring the possibility of opening the relationship.
- When both partners are ready to deal with the changes and challenges that will arise in an open relationship.

For example, Jenny and Allison have been together for 6 years and their relationship is working for the most part. Major intimacy and communication issues have been worked out in couple's therapy and they both feel generally satisfied. Jenny has been talking to Allison for the past few months about opening their couple, but Allison has been resistant.

Because trying polyamory is important to Jenny and the relationship is currently more stable and loving, Allison agrees to open the relationship. Allison has some reservations, but is willing to try. Jenny is patient and available for reassurance to address Allison's discomfort or insecurity that may arise as the open relationship progresses.

**When opening your relationship is likely to go awry (perhaps these can be addressed in couple or individual therapy):**

- When the marriage or partnership isn't working. Perhaps there is frequent conflict or one or both partners isn't getting multiple needs met
- When one partner becomes attracted to another person and decides to push the other partner to open the relationship so that they can act on the attraction
- There is infidelity in the couple, and in response one or more partners decides that opening the relationship is the best course of action.
- The relationship seems stale, boring, and un nourishing
- One partner strongly disagrees or is unwilling to open the couple
- One partner is intensely fearful about how the relationship may change or intensely insecure about being "left" or abandoned

For example, a couple in therapy, Tim and Deandra, have been married for 17 years with two children, ages 15 and 13. Deandra is a partner at a prestigious law firm, while Tim works part time at home contracting tech work. Tim and Deandra's relationship has been increasingly rocky for the last 3 years. As their romantic relationship deteriorated, Deandra worked more often, increasing the distance felt in the relationship. Neither Tim nor Deandra are interested in divorce, especially until their kids are in college.

Deandra is adamant that their intimacy isn't going to improve as a couple. She wants to open the relationship. Tim is tired of the distance in their relationship, but doesn't know how to reconnect and revitalize their relationship. He is against opening the relationship and wants to keep working in couple's therapy. However, he is willing to concede to Deandra and open their relationship, although it's likely he won't have any other partners.