

This article highlights how monogamy can protect our insecurities with agreements inherent in “exclusive” relationship, partnership, or marriage.

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.

Challenging Insecurity in Monogamy & Nonmonogamy

In a monogamous relationship when you’re attracted to others, you might avoid mentioning it to your partner. Revealing these attractions can stir up your partner’s insecurity (e.g., “She will leave me,” “I’m not good enough,” “He doesn’t love me.”), jealousy, or anger. “Am I flirting too much? Is this going too far? What would my partner think?” might be questions that are on your mind. When you hide your natural attraction to others, you are protecting your partner from his insecurities and avoiding a discourse that could be an opportunity for personal growth.

Monogamy is an agreement to exclude acting on or having attractions beyond your current relationship. When you feel jealous, you can question, distrust, and constrain how your partner interacts with others to whom she is attracted. This means your attention is on the *external situation* and how it needs to change to relieve your jealousy and insecurities. Because polyamory provides openness where your partner’s attraction to others can be acknowledged and pursued, insecurities that arise are treated as *internal opportunities* for personal growth.

In polyamory, instead of asking, “Can I trust my partner?” you focus on creating your own internal security and equanimity. “Can I trust that I am great enough and worthy of my partner’s commitment and affection? Can I trust that if my partner ‘leaves me’ for another, that I will eventually be able to move on and be content alone and/or in another relationship?”

Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that your partner won’t be attracted to others or faithful to whatever monogamous or nonmonogamous relationship commitment/agreement you have. However, often our insecurities about losing our partner to another motivate our needing monogamous commitment or strict contracts in polyamory, as if it guaranteed loyalty and our internal security.

If you find yourself in a pattern of jealousy and insecurity in relationships, this could be related to many factors. Maybe your partner or a past partner has been unfaithful in the past and you are having trouble trusting. If your self-confidence is low, you may feel like others to which your current partner is attracted will be better than you. Perhaps you worry your partner will leave you and that

you won't be able to have another relationship as fulfilling as this one. Maybe you feel like you partner shouldn't be attracted to others, and that their attraction to others is a betrayal to your commitment.

All of these internal stories or feelings can be addressed in individual rather than couple psychotherapy. Individual psychotherapy allows for more focus on you, and the insecurities, distortions, and discomfort that arise when your partner is attracted to another or pursues intimacy with another (i.e., nonmonogamy). The anger, disappointment, or fear that arises in you can be explored in depth, such that you can start to notice the nonverbal experience that accompanies the negative scripts (e.g., "He's attracted to others because I'm not good enough," "She'll leave me the first chance she gets," "He doesn't love me like I love him," "She wants other lovers because I can't satisfy her.") When you are familiar with the script and nonverbal experience accompanying whatever triggers jealousy, you can practice accepting and handling differently what used to overwhelm you and hijack your thoughts/behavior.

Of course, if you find that your partner is behaving in ways that betray your trust or your commitment/agreement, steps need to be taken to repair and rebuild, or the relationship needs to end. Trust is essential. However, as discussed above, distrust in partnership can be a mixture of you and your partner's external/interpersonal behavior and internal insecurity.