

# Open Hearts, Open Minds: Exploring “Alternative” Relationship Structures

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Modern romance dictates that a single individual should fulfill all of our needs- from sharing joys and fears, co-parenting and financial commitments to sexual happiness, identity confirmation and spiritual fulfillment. Is this fair? We will look into what relationships give us, then explore a wide variety of relationship structures that are being employed to have people fill all of their needs. Monogamy and serial monogamy are valid options, but what about polyamory, swinging, pre-arranged trysts, friends with benefits, and more? How do we communicate in our relationships to make whatever structure we choose actually work, and of course we'll plunge into issues like jealousy vs. envy, new relationship energy, and making each of our friends and partners feel like the unique person they are in our lives.

## A bit about your presenter and today's workshop

### What do people get out of relationships?

Fun/Silliness	Humor	Connection
Sharing Joys	Sharing Fears	Conversation
Finances	Love	Shared Hobbies/Activities
Internal Identity	Community acceptance	
Co-explorer/adventurer		Romance
Perceived/External Identity		
Co-housing	Breeding Partner	Co-parenting
Day to day living	Not being/feeling alone	
Shoulder to cry on	Sounding Board/Intellectual partner	
Someone to take care of		
Someone to take care of you		
Bed warmer/Sleeping Partner		
Foreplay	Sex	Orgasms
Passion	Pleasure	Story/Fantasy telling
BDSM	Fetish Exploration	Role Play
Spirituality	Sensuality	Spiritual Connection
Meditation	Making Art/Music	Shared Silence
Someone to be buried with		

### Types of relationships

Celibacy

Solo	Monogamy	Serial Monogamy
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Monogamy with non-sexual exceptions (partner there? Pre-approved? Carte blanche?)

Monogamy with sexual (but non-relationship/romance) exceptions

Monogamy with scene exceptions

Swingers (sex focus on outside lovers)

Polyamory (romance focus on outside lovers)

Hierarchical Poly (primary, secondary, tertiary, etc)

Egalitarian Poly (all equal)

Ethical Sluts	Sluts	Players
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## **More Types of Relationships**

Professional Relationships (sexual surrogates, sex workers, bdsm workers)

Dedicated triads/quads/Polygamy/Polyandry

Spiritual Unions (dedications to the divine, Mormon celestial plural marriage, Voudon god marriage)

Weekend/Event trysts (pre-arranged or spur of the moment? Open/truth sharing? Don't ask don't tell)

Friends willing to indulge

Friends with benefits

The Internet/Chat/Pen pal/Phone debate? What is real to \*you\*

## **The issues relationships face**

Establishing communication styles- can we talk over the phone? Journal? Notes? Or only in person- what communication style do you have? What love style do you have?

To fight or not to fight- arguments, discussions

Vetoes, Discussions, Debates

The stuff going on under the surface

Levels of relationship formality

How do you bring in new folks?

Keeping each person special

Date nights, pet names, roles, dynamics, and activities

Who is your "first call"?

How do the parents, kids, work life fit into all of this?

Do relationships stay in the closet?

Envy vs. Jealousy (do you want to be there/part of it, do you not want it happening, do you feel replaced, lied to, fearful, angry?)

New Relationship Energy (NRE)- is it possible to keep it fresh? Are you addicted to NRE?

The titillation of the forbidden

The "safety" of the out of town fling/relationship

Out of sight, out of mind

24/7 live-in formats

Friendships and Bowling buddies

What do you want?

What do you need?

How does that make you feel?

Person specific? Play specific? Situation specific?

How often?

How to communicate needs?

Frustrations?

Honesty to the self first

Owning Your Own Issues