



Chapter Thirteen: Sustaining other relationship(s) throughout the break-up

The majority of polyamorous people going through a break-up have at least one other partner, and this can be very comforting and supportive during this hellish time. However, it can also be very difficult, because other relationships require your energy and attention at a time when you are at your worst. When you have multiple partners, and one of them leaves you, it can be extremely challenging to

maintain and sustain the remaining relationship(s). It is very difficult to mourn the ending of a relationship, and at the same time remain present and available for your remaining partner or partners.

Lennie said, “In my past, I was in a monogamous marriage, and when my wife dumped me, I went to work on autopilot and somehow managed to avoid getting fired. I went from work to a sports bar every night and drank beer and watched football. I didn’t talk to anyone and didn’t have any responsibility towards anyone. But this time, I was in a poly relationship living with Angelica, and had been dating Stacy for two years. Suddenly Stacy broke up with me. I was in a state of shock, and I had no idea how to go through a poly break-up. I tried talking to Angelica about it, but she really didn’t want to console me every night about how much I missed Stacy, and yeah, I get that. I couldn’t go to the sports bar and drink every night, because my partner expected and deserved my time and attention.”

One long-suffering partner said, “I’m still here, so why aren’t you happy with me?” Another said, “I’ve been so loyal and stood by you through all the shenanigans with your girlfriend! I stayed with you through the ups and downs with this crazy chick for over five years. I held your hand through her breaking up with you and getting back together three times. And now she ends it for good, and you’ve spent the last four months crying over her and trying to win her back, and totally ignoring my existence.”

Most people feel so depressed and confused over losing the other partner, that they are inadvertently creating the impression that this other lover was much more important than they let on while the relationship existed.

You need to communicate MORE rather than less when you are going through a painful poly break-up. Many people have expressed reluctance to talk to their remaining partner about what they are going through, out of fear that they won’t be capable of providing what their partner needs from them, and that they will feel even worse for having “failed” their partner. However, most people report feeling relieved that both parties have gotten their feelings, resentments, and fears out in the open, and usually this leads to feeling closer and more emotionally connected again. And often some simple but useful problem-solving ideas come out of the discussion which can make both partners feel much better.