



Chapter Five:

Problems one partner brings into the relationship: addictions, untreated mental health conditions, and abuse

These cannot really be called relationship problems, because they did not originate in the relationship. Instead, one person brought a problem with them into the relationship, and only they can solve it. If one person in the relationship has a cocaine addiction, for instance, only that person can fix that, by deciding to stop using drugs and getting the help they need to stay clean and sober. Or, if one person has an untreated bi-polar condition, untreated depression or anxiety, borderline personality disorder, or other mental health problem, only that person can address it, by recognizing the symptoms and seeking support, counseling, and/or medication. If a partner has problems with anger management, only they can resolve that by getting counseling, going to anger management classes, or finding some other way to address the root causes of their anger. In these situations, their partners are powerless to solve the problem, no matter how much they may try. However, any of these three types or problems will inevitably cause the demise of relationships if the partner who has the problem does not take action or get help.

Addiction

Addiction is a heart-breaking problem that destroys many relationships, both monogamous and polyamorous. However, in poly relationships, addiction often plays a more complicated role in a break-up. In a poly relationship, an alcoholic or drug addict is often able to hide their addiction for much longer, especially in a secondary or play partner relationship where they may not spend as much time with any one partner as they would in a monogamous relationship.

Untreated mental health conditions

Untreated mental health conditions often lead to poly break-ups. In a monogamous relationship where you live with your partner or spend most of your time with them, symptoms of these conditions are likely to become obvious quickly. But it takes many poly people a lot longer to figure out that a partner is struggling with clinical depression, an anxiety disorder, a bipolar condition, or some other serious mental health issue. In a poly relationship you might only see your partner infrequently, and you may

not be paying such close attention to their behaviors if the relationship is not serious. As a result, many people are shocked when suddenly (or so it seems), a partner becomes very depressed, or has a panic attack, or seems very agitated and irrational. Frequently this will frighten someone into ending the relationship, as they feel this is not the person they thought they were involved with. This is especially true if they do not have any experience with mental health conditions and don't know how to support a partner through such a crisis.

Abusive relationships

Abusive can manifest in both polyamorous and monogamous relationships, and can destroy relationships of all kinds. It is much more common for men, and primarily cis-gendered men, to verbally, emotionally, or physically abuse partners, but some women and other variously-gendered people also become abusive. Sometimes when a previously monogamous couple decides to open up the relationship, jealousy can trigger intense reactions that can spiral into abusive behavior. This can be quite shocking, particularly if someone has never exhibited this type of behavior in the relationship before. Trying to cope with a partner having a sexual or romantic relationship with someone else can cause someone such distress that they lash out at their partner. This behavior can take many forms: verbal outburst of name-calling, insulting or shaming a partner, threats of violence towards a partner or the outside lover, breaking dishes or punching holes in a door or wall, threatening to "out" a partner's other relationship to their family or in their workplace, destroying gifts or cards from the other lover, showing up uninvited when their partner is on a date, threatening to take custody of the children, or threatening suicide.