



## Chapter One: Sexual problems cause lots of break-ups, both poly and monogamous

This include basic incompatibilities around sex, such as differing libidos, different tastes in sexual activities, and power struggles around sex, as well as cheating and breaking agreements around sex.

Cheating is high on the list of sexual causes of break-ups. In a monogamous relationship, “cheating” usually means having sex and/or romance with anyone outside the relationship, and usually

involves lying and a betrayal of trust. For monogamous couples, the definition of cheating seems to have been enlarged quite a bit in recent years to include “emotional affairs” (close friendships which have some kind of romantic overtones, but which usually do not include sex). These are seen as threatening to the monogamous pair-bond because so much intimacy and closeness is shared.

In poly relationships, many people also “cheat,” but since sex with other people is allowed, cheating is usually defined as breaking an agreement you have made with your partner about sex or other relationships. Some couples make agreements about sexual behaviors such as:

- Don't have unprotected sex with anyone else but me
- Don't sleep with my best friend or anyone in our immediate social circle
- Don't have an affair with any of your co-workers
- Don't get any other women pregnant (if male), or, don't get pregnant by any other man (if female)
- Don't bring home any sexually transmitted infections and give them to me
- Don't get so worn out from having sex with your other partners that you are too tired to have sex with me on the weekend
- Don't have sex with anyone else in our bed
- Don't fall in love with anyone you have sex with, just keep it casual or secondary
- Don't have sex with someone new without telling me first (or full and quick disclosure reasonably soon after the fact).

Breaking these agreements are the kinds of sexual behaviors that poly people define as cheating, and may cause a poly break-up. As with the monogamous people, many poly people say it is the broken trust rather than the sexual behavior that makes it hardest to get over a breach of one of these agreements. The logic is: if their partner had such bad judgement or cared so little about the agreements they made, that they have disregarded those agreements and do whatever they wanted anyway, what is the point of making agreements? And what would prevent them from doing it again, or breaking any new agreements we make?