



Chapter Three: Domestic Issues and conflicts that lead to breaking up

What are sometimes described as “domestic issues” also doom many relationships, both poly and monogamous. This includes all the issues that can arise from two or more people living together. These include housework, cleanliness, scheduling dates and other activities, deciding whether to have children, and if so, how to raise the kids, policies about guests, how to deal with in-laws and other relatives, room-mates, noise, food preferences, cooking, and the division of labor in the household.

Many poly relationships start out with a heterosexual couple, where the wife is already unhappy because the man is not doing his share of housework and child-care. For instance, this unequal division of labor was already a serious cause of fighting in Marcia and Joe's marriage long before they decided to open up their marriage to other partners. However, when he started going out on dates with Gail a few nights a week, Marcia was outraged and filed for divorce. At a couples' counseling session he explained that on the nights when he was home, he was sitting on the couch drinking beer and watching TV, while Marcia cooked dinner, washed the dishes, and put the kids to bed. “I'm not doing any work when I'm at home, so what's the difference if I'm out seeing my girlfriend?” Marcia explained that she was always angry that he was not doing anything to help, but that his being out on dates added insult to injury. “When I'm home all alone with a sick kid, and cleaning up barf and changing diapers, knowing that you are out with another woman makes me want to murder you.”

In situations where a poly triad or “four-some” are living together, domestic issues frequently cause break-ups. Many people have discovered to their dismay that it's hard enough to live with one partner and achieve some amount of compatibility around housework, whether to eat meat or not, whether you can smoke pot in the house, child-rearing practices, clutter, noise levels, enjoying the same social activities, etc. So what are the odds that three or four people will have such a high level of affinity that they can live together happily. The more people in the household, the more complicated it is for everyone to have enough room and enough control over their space, and the harder it is to get the right balance of togetherness, alone time, and privacy.