



Chapter Seven:

The most common cause of poly break-ups:

Picking the wrong partners:

Falling in love with a committed monogamist

The most common reason for a polyamorous relationship to end is the one partner turns out to be a “dyed in the wool” monogamist. Often, the monogamous person does not realize that they have a strong need for sexual and romantic exclusivity, and they only discover this irrefutable fact through months or years of trying to accept a poly relationship and being absolutely miserable. Sometimes they already know that a monogamous relationship is ideal for them, but they mistakenly believe they can learn to cope with their partner having other relationships. Or, the monogamous partner is convinced that their partner will eventually give up their other partners and become monogamous. Usually the polyamorous person in the relationship shares in this delusional thinking: they naively believe they can convert an innately monogamous person to the joys of polyamory, and this is rarely possible.

Sometimes both people convince themselves that their love is so powerful that it can overcome any obstacle. They practically get whiplash from vacillating wildly between statements like: “I can put up with her living with Bill, I understand that she wants to stay married to him because of the children,” and then the next day declaring, “I need to demand that she leave Bill and promise to be exclusive with me,” and the next day saying, “If I just wait and let our relationship grow, she’ll realize that our love is more important and she’ll eventually choose a monogamous relationship with me.” They repeat this painful cycle over and over again until one of them eventually realizes that there is no happy ending in sight. Usually, the monogamous partner leaves the relationship, as they realize that no matter how much they love their partner, they will never be happy sharing their beloved with anyone else.

The monogamous partner usually asks me, “Isn’t there something I can do to make them happy with me so they won’t want any other lovers?” Of course the answer is a “No,” because an openness to and affinity for multiple partners is a core aspect of being polyamorous. And the poly partner usually says, “Can’t you train them to get over their monogamous programming and be okay with me being poly?” Again the answer is “No,” because for monogamists, needing to be the one and only partner is a core part of their sexual and relational orientation.