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**Is mononormativity still in our dating practices?**  
**Morgan @chillpolyamory**

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Good morning and happy Sunday, I hope that you're having a beautiful weekend. So a request that I got recently, which I think is pertinent, regardless of how long we're practicing non monogamy is, Am I still dating with mono normative ideas, and that stuff can get really deeply ingrained, and can be very subtle. So I thought I would explore some of my own thoughts and signals on what mono normativity in polyamorous dating can look like, so that we can keep an eye out for it and decide, you know, is this a problem or not? You know, I don't really want to demonize monogamy, you know, but I think the normativity of it, the assumption of it the unquestioned or unchecked norms, that is always worth exploring and unpacking. Because we can't really build something different if we don't really know what we're building differently from.

So the first and most obvious is, of course, the relationship escalator. Right. And if we are, you know, dating somebody, and it is not progressing in some way that we can point to, oh, well, we're not spending an increased amount of time together. Oh, well, you know, they don't seem to be wanting to call me their partner. And you sort of dissatisfaction that comes from the assumption that a successful dating situation, a successful relationship is one that is growing or building toward a destination.

A big monogamous thing is comparing. a big monogamous thing is comparing, I'll say it again, of, well, I really love this person. And I'd like to expand and know more people. So I'm going on a date, that, you know, they don't have the sense of humor that this person has, they're not as hot as this, I'm not as sexually charged with this person, as somebody else, comparing a new person, two qualities that you already have in your life with other people, that kind of sets the new person up to fail, because they are essentially competing in your mind that can make us miss what new things they have that are interesting that we can be curious about, am I approaching a date with curiosity? I've been on dates before where I was like, I don't really have chemistry with this person, sort of broad chemistry, I don't see myself really wanting to spend regular time with this person. And also, I'm here with them right now. What can I learn about them? What, what where's the overlap of what we both enjoy and agree on that we can maybe have an expansive conversation tonight. And then even if we never see each other, again, I've been present in that moment, I've enjoyed that person, are we approaching a new person, actually curious about that person, and not what they can do for us.

One sort of monogamish thing that can present itself is when there's tension or awkwardness, in proactive transparency about other partners, a lot of times people

can be really excited about a new partner, and really nervous to share that enthusiasm or give a update, even just a clinical logistical update to existing partners out of fear that they'll feel uncomfortable out of fear of, you know, their reaction, I'm not above being really awkward in disclosure, right, that can still happen, especially if I sort of have lulls of six or eight months where I don't really feel like dating, the minute that I get back into dating, I can be a little rusty. In disclosure, I can feel a little awkward, you know, I can hold my breath or tense up, you know, even if nothing is wrong, even if I'm not breaking any boundaries, there can be that monogamous guilt, there can be that, you know, normative shame of sharing with a partner, your enthusiasm about another partner, you know, and so at the very least, I tried to bring up that discomfort of like, I want to update you on my date or this relationship. And I'm feeling really scared. And I can't tell how much of that is old shit that I'm responsible for. And how much of that is, I want to be tender with you, or you've been really nervous, how can I take care of you in this? You know, so I think if there is a block on transparency, especially proactive disclosure, then discussion about that block could be a door into actually creating a new protocol with that person in particular.

Another aspect of modern normativity that can sneak in is, you know, an assumption that there is an entitlement to their time, to their energy. You know, when we are dating only one person at a time when we are their exclusive sexual or romantic point of focus, then there can be that mutual assumption that Oh, you have extra time you're going to spend it with me or you're going to do that fun date. It'll be with me. Are we still doing that? Are we still getting competitive? Are we still experiencing scarcity? Maybe you've internalized at this point that you're not in first place in their life, that you're sharing that positionality, that closeness to that person. But then still take it personally, well, I'm one of several first places, right? So why are you going to meet this new person? You know what I mean? That, in my opinion, is still an offshoot of that monogamous centric mentality.

This is all speaking very broadly, if you are in a conflict with someone, if you have expressed to someone, oh, I'd like to spend more time with you, or I'm feeling distant from you. And then without discussing, oh, I have some free time, and I'm not going to give it to you right? that could indicate a conflict that could indicate, you know, point of tension that needs to be really discussed. And so I don't think that broad generalizations are so easy to make. But I think it can be a point of conversation.

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A big one that I cannot believe I did not mention first, is prioritizing sexual relationships over non sexual relationships. This is ingrained in us from childhood that an important relationship is a sexual one. And anytime you speak to an asexual person, or someone on an a row, a spectrum, they will probably voice their own frustration with being seen as not serious or less important in various dating scenarios, because sex is not necessarily part of their dynamic, right? And it is so monogamous it is so in pursuit of a nuclear family normative to say, Oh, well, the person with whom I have sex is the most important. And this absolutely gets expanded into polyamory, just because you're having sex with five people, if you are positioning all five of those people as inherently more important than your platonic connections than your community connections. I think that that is still absolutely part of the modern normative, relationality, right? that is not necessarily as radical as you might think it is.

And look, I'm not in the business of telling anyone who to value specifically, I'm not accusing anyone of being problematic. I am encouraging self inquiry, that if any part of you resonates with this, or hasn't really thought about it, you are in good company, right? We all are thinking of it for the first time at some point, right? And we all can be doing this for years and still say, Oh, shit, yeah, that's kind of monogamous of me, you know, and that's not making you bad at polyamory, that's not making you a less progressive, radical person, right? That is not a moral failing. That is an indicator of how few alternative structures have been given to us. I'm currently reading undoing monogamy it is a very dense and thoughtful and well researched book, essentially about antimononormativity through a biological and scientific lens of people who have conducted studies or people who have said It is human nature to do this, that is still filtered through people's biases and people's agendas. And so it explores how polyamory and other forms of non monogamy have been manipulated and called either unnatural or extremely natural, right and used in the politics of science. So anyway, that book is undoing monogamy and yeah, it is not an easy, relaxed read, but it is a very compelling one.

Okay, what else do we do that is still kind of monogamish? I might posit Fluid bonding monogamy. or treating fluid bonding as a sacred emotional experience. This, again, is not an attack, right? We also really want to be sure that we have STI safety and security that there is for some people who are trying to child rear, maybe there is a concern about paternity. It is not uncommon for people to see somebody that they're fluid bonding with as more important. As more serious, more committed, oh, I am only doing this; this is sacred with this person. And sometimes

we can even do it to ourselves, we can convince ourselves but because of safety was because of safety. We don't want new people in the mix. If there is a test, you know, there is plenty of risk minimization possible to have a relatively newer partner, be fluid bonded with you and if we're really getting into an STI concern There is often less concern about fluid exchange orally than there is penetrative. Right. And so it's just merits a question if fluid bonding feels very sacrosanct. Why? Just why? And it's not, I am not in the business of urging anyone to set any particular boundaries about who they have sex with, and how and what their safer sex practices are like, that is a discussion between consenting adults, but I think it is important for us to examine our own motivations. Am I asking for this? Am I expecting even that it is implicit? Oh, well, I'm the longer term partner so of course, I'm the fluid bonded one, and you wouldn't fluid bond with somebody else, because that means maybe I'm threatened. You know, that means maybe I'm literally threatened and I stopped short. And just say it's all about STIs, when really, there's an emotional component of, Oh, I'm threatened of my position at the top of most important and I could be edged out or replaced or have to share my intimacy and my access to this person, if there's any ounce, however, small of us seeing fluid bonding, monogamy, or fluid bonding, poly fidelity, as an indicator of our emotional security as an indicator of our primacy over newer people, if we are taking personal offense to somebody wanting to fluid bond with somebody else that is worth exploring, right? if this is all STI related.

So I'm just gonna throw that out there. Because I do think it's discourse that is under discussed. And because I'm not a sex educator, I don't really always feel so confident, especially in public settings, speaking in a declarative fashion about that. But I do speak a lot about emotional security and the origins of the stories we tell ourselves. And in that respect, what is the story? We're telling ourselves about fluid bonding? And is there any sort of patriarchal, conservative religious, you know, morality, lingering in that, that if we have opted out of other systems? Are we still bringing that along with us and why?

I think a lot of other ones that can come to mind are essentially covered in my couples privilege video from a few weeks ago. Anything that is couples centric, anything that is focused on a dyad as the most important by default, right, even if you are structuring it, so that a dyad is more intertwined with each other and a dyad does more things with each other, that being a default, is different than that being discussed with everybody impacted by that, you know, being single, who is meeting someone who has long term relationships, we can also put ourselves in the inverse position. Oh, well, of course, I wouldn't, you know, be so close with that person. Of

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course, I wouldn't ever be considered for this kind of commitment, because obviously, I'm less important, right? any sort of self denigrating, positioning ourselves as less important without discussion just by default. Why? Why is that? Of course, because they've been around longer. I've known people 25 years, much longer than my relationship with the person I live with. I definitely don't want to have kids with that person and T might someday, in which case, am I still, obviously a default, even though a newer person will be the person that coparents, you know what I mean? why, why, of course, what is the expectation assumption given? And can we trace it to its root? Is that coming from us? Or is that coming from? You know, well, that's just what you do.

So, honestly, that's what comes to mind for me about monogamish dating, things like this, that really we get taught is the only way to relate to people. Again, I'm not demonizing any of those things on an individual case by case basis, but rather, why is this the only path and the non negotiated default path? And is it functioning? Is it even what we want? So anyway, I'd love to know what other things come to your mind in terms of modern normative dating. I'm sure there is an endless lists that a book could probably be written about. I'd love to know your experiences and I'd love to know what else you want to talk about. Hope you have a beautiful week.