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Polyamory: A Clinical Toolkit for Therapists (and Their
Clients): Reproducible Handout Set

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RELATIONSHIP CONCEPT WORKSHEETS

Together these worksheets support an exploration of beliefs, biases, hopes, and dreams about monogamy, polyamory, and any other relationship style you can imagine, while honoring each individual's life aspirations and supporting the ultimate goal of a joyous life. They are equally relevant to a therapist exploring their biases about polyamory or monogamy, or a couple considering the pros and cons of various relationship styles. They can serve as a guide to self-exploration or discussion topics for interesting conversations.

This set of worksheets includes the following:

- **My Relationship Ideas: Reflection Worksheet**
Explores life events and perceptions of different types of relationships and how they have formed your ideas about fidelity, romantic connection, and many other aspects of relationships.
- **Examining Assumptions About Relationship Structures**
Guides consideration of the pros and cons of different relationship structures from a theoretical level and invites thinking about the degree to which the things you want in a relationship are related to the type of relationship you are in.
- **Dreams and Desires**
Invites thinking about what you desire, long for, and would like to create in your life, and your relationships, and how you might bring those aspects of joy into your life in your relationships, as well as in other ways.



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MY RELATIONSHIP IDEAS: REFLECTION WORKSHEET

Think back to the romantic or committed relationships you witnessed when you were a child: parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbors, community leaders, older siblings, etc.

- How were these relationships structured? Monogamous? Open? Other? How did you know?
- What were you raised to believe about fidelity? Do you have memories of learning about infidelity? Did you witness any of the adults in your life dealing with the impact of infidelity? What was it like?
- What were you raised to believe about relationship agreements? Were they negotiable? Set in stone? Made by people? Made by God? Did you witness any adults in your life renegotiate relationship agreements?
- Did the adults in your life discuss things, generally? What happened when there was a disagreement? Did you have role models for positive experiences of coming to agreement or achieving resolution? Were collaboration and creative problem-solving valued and supported?
- Were you raised to follow a rule book or come up with your own solutions? Were your parents independent-thinking rebels, rock-solid upholders-of-convention, or somewhere in between?
- Were you raised in a faith tradition? What did your religious tradition teach you about marriage and relationships?
- Did anyone in your community have an “out of the norm” relationship (by your community’s standards) that you were aware of? How did you know? How did people treat them and talk about them?

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- Was sex discussed in your family and/or community? If so, how was it discussed? Did you grow up thinking sex was a positive thing, secret, shameful, or something else?

Think about the time when you began to have romantic feelings and intimate relationships.

- In your earliest relationships, what ideas did you have about what was normal and acceptable in a romantic relationship? Where did you get your ideas about what was and wasn't okay? Did you discuss fidelity and other agreements with your partner(s)? If so, what were those conversations like?
- Did those ideas change in later relationships? How and why?
- What kinds of relationships did you witness your friends having? How were those relationships structured? How did you know about their structures? How did people talk about other people's relationships? How did your friends talk about fidelity, infidelity, agreements, monogamy, and nonmonogamy?
- Have you had experiences with infidelity? How about broken agreements of other kinds? Were you on the giving or receiving end? Did your beliefs about relationships change as a result of either infidelity or broken agreements? Do you think the wounds associated with those breaches have healed? If not, what do you think would be needed to mend the wounds? Is there something you could do from within yourself that would make a difference in your healing?
- Have you ever been in a nonmonogamous relationship? If so, what was that like for you? For your partner(s)? If not, what is the first thought that comes to mind about whether you would ever choose to be in a nonmonogamous relationship?
- Have you ever found yourself in a situation in which a previous relationship agreement is no longer working for you? Did you initiate a renegotiation of a

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relationship agreement with one of your partners? Have you ever lied about something rather than discuss it? Have you tended to give up something important to you rather than discuss it and renegotiate?

How did you decide what to do? What happened as a result? How do you feel about it in retrospect?

- Do you think of yourself as being a little conflict-averse or are you more on the side of volatility? How willing are you to initiate a difficult discussion? How able are you to make a soft landing place for someone else to tell you something difficult?

Think about your friends, mentors, and role models. These might be actual people you know and love or fictional characters from a book or movie.

- Do you have role models for positive long-term monogamous relationships? If so, what do you admire about the people involved and their relationship?
- Do you have role models of positive long-term open relationships? If so, what do you admire about the people involved and their relationship?
- If you don't have role models for either monogamy, open relationships, or both, what do you make of that?

Now that you've written down a few notes about each of these questions, take a minute to write down any thoughts that pop out for you after having reflected on these questions. What do you think your current beliefs are about fidelity, nonmonogamy, relationship agreements, polyamory, and related issues? Indicate which of your current beliefs you want to keep and which you would prefer to change. Next to the ones you would prefer to change, write a brief statement about why you want to change them.



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EXAMINING ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT RELATIONSHIP STRUCTURES

This exercise will challenge you to consider the potential benefits and pitfalls of a wide variety of relationship styles. You'll be challenged to think beyond your personal experience and consider the reasons why someone might choose a specific relationship structure for themselves.

- Why might some choose a monogamous relationship? List as many reasons as you can think of. Think about reasons that relate to belief systems, preferences, fears, dreams, desires.
- Why might someone choose to have multiple concurrent sex-only relationships? List as many reasons as you can think of. Consider people you have known, thoughts or feelings you or your partner(s) have had, and books you have read. Why might someone want to hook up, swing, or otherwise have sex with more than one concurrent relationship or person?
- Why might someone choose to have multiple concurrent love/romantic relationships? List as many reasons as you can think of. Again, reference people you have known, thoughts and feelings you or partners have had, books you have read, and anything you can imagine.
- What do you think are the potential pitfalls of monogamy? List as many as you can.
- What do you think are the potential pitfalls of open nonromantic relationships? List as many as you can think of.
- What do you think are the potential pitfalls of polyamorous or romantic open relationships? List as many as you can think of.

Take a moment to consider whether the things you listed under reasons to choose various relationship types actually correlate with the desired outcomes. For instance, say you answered “to feel secure” when considering why someone might choose monogamy. You would then ask yourself if monogamy actually provides security. You might also ask yourself, “Does opening a relationship



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preclude security?”

Next, move even further into the exploration. Ask yourself, “How could a person structure a monogamous relationship to create emotional security? How could a person structure a nonromantic open relationship to create security? How could someone structure their polyamorous relationship to create security?”

Let’s look at another example. Say that, under reasons for having an open relationship, you put “sexual adventure.” Ask yourself, “Does an open relationship actually provide sexual adventure? Does monogamy prevent sexual adventure? How could a person structure a monogamous relationship to support sexual adventure? How could a person structure a nonromantic open relationship to enable sexual adventure? How about a polyamorous relationship?”

For each answer you gave, take some time to question it. Remember, this is not really about any choice or decision you will eventually make; it is about questioning your assumptions and getting clear on how you are connecting thoughts or ideas.

If you proceed from the assumption that all of the benefits—and all of the pitfalls—that you listed are possible in any type of relationship, with any relationship structure, what difference might that make in your life and relationships? In your ability to support others in their relationship?



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DREAMS AND DESIRES

What is important to you in life and in a relationship? Consider things you deeply desire. What do you long for? What would make your life feel juicy, exciting, and magical? This list will vary from person to person, but here are a few examples of the kind of things that might show up: emotional security, financial security, fun, great sex, deep emotional connection, sexual adventure, long-term stability, creativity, joy, travel, deep conversations, great teamwork—you get the idea.

- Now make your own personal list of things that are important to you in life and in your relationship.
- Go through your list and think carefully about these questions:
 - For each item, can you see a way that you could bring that into your life without depending on any other person to do it for you? For instance, if you listed emotional security, ask yourself, “What do I do to make myself feel secure?” If you listed sexual adventure, ask yourself, “How do I express my sexually adventurous nature?” If you listed deep conversations, ask yourself, “What do I do to take conversations to a deeper level?”
 - Which of these desires do you imagine being met by one partner? Can you imagine some of these desires being met by a platonic close friend or friends? Community members? Another partner in a purely sexual relationship? Another partner in a romantic relationship?

The idea here is to empower you to enrich your life with the exact aspects of life that feel the juiciest and most important to you. Think of desire as the fuel that powers joy and see how much joy you can create in your life and relationships.



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Feeling the exciting feelings associated with your juiciest dreams and desires is good for you. You don't have to wait for them to actually happen to enjoy feeling them, and you probably can also make a lot of parts of them happen as a part of your regular life without much else changing. Consider getting playful or creative: write poetry about your dreams and desires, or make a vision board or some artwork about them, or anything else you can think of.

You might also enjoy sharing some of your dreams and desires with your partner(s). Discuss ideas you find intriguing, interesting, or exciting. Get curious about their dreams and desires too. These conversations should be fun, and are a great way to get to know yourself, and your partner(s) more deeply. They will also give you practice talking and listening in turns and accessing depth and curiosity with some topics that are exciting, hopeful, and positive.