



Wild & Sublime® Podcast, Season 2 Episode 43
“Polyamory Q&A: Poly-mono, cohabitating, solo poly, couple rules”
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Panelists answer listener questions about the specifics of polyamorous relationships.

Host: Karen Yates

Guests: Peter Navarro, Erica Washington, Jason Best

[Wild & Sublime theme music]

Peter Navarro

What happens when we cohabitate is, we can start to build up stories about what we expect from our other, without letting the other know that we're expecting that from them.

Erica Washington

When people are getting into these relationships, they really need to check themselves to say, okay, am I getting into this because I'm just trying this out, or am I getting into this because this is the real lifestyle that I want to have?

Jason Best

I think it's just about making sure that there's always something in it for you.

Karen Yates

Welcome to Wild & Sublime, a sexy spin on infotainment®, no matter your preferences, orientation, or relationship style, based on the popular live Chicago show. Each week, I'll chat about sex and relationships with citizens from the world of sex positivity. You'll hear meaningful conversation, dialogues that go deeper, and information that can help you become more free in your sexual expression. I'm sex educator Karen Yates.

This week, our panel answers far-reaching and nitty-gritty questions on polyamory. Keep listening! The segment you're about to hear was first birthed on our Patreon membership site months ago, and the questions came from Patreon subscribers.

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Hey, folks, I almost split this conversation into two separate episodes — we covered so much ground — but then I thought it was better off as one. Why? Well, we've done a few new-to-polyamory episodes, but we haven't done one that gets into the intricacies. And I think this conversation does some of that. Now, if you're thinking, "I'm not polyamorous and I don't care," I do think there are some insights in this chat that cross relational platforms, if you will, like cohabitating, pandemic changes, jealousy, identity switching — so you might find something there.

We have — new to this panel — clinical and holistic mental health therapist Erica Washington; recurring guest, clinical professional counselor and dance movement therapist, Peter Navarro; and the always popular sex-positive therapist and founder of Best Therapies, Jason Best. We begin with the first question. Enjoy.

So question one: "My partner and I have been together for a few years. Pre-pandemic, we had other partners polyamorously. During COVID, we moved in together and didn't see other people. Now that things are opening up, we stopped living together, and my partner is interested in someone who is monogamous, and interested in him too. He thinks it's okay to date her. She knows about me. I'm having a lot — capital L-O-T — of feelings about all of this. I think he's an asshole for pursuing someone who's monogamous. He disagrees. I'm also wondering about how us living together changed the relationship for me. Maybe I'm less poly than I thought? Or is this just jealousy? What do I do? Signed, Baffled and Upset." So, that is question one. Let's open this up for conversation.

Erica Washington

Well, that question of whether or not they're jealous, or they are just responding to a change in the relationship — I think they're trying to compare two different things. Because the change is an event, and the jealousy is a reaction. So you can't really say whether or not the jealousy has come about because of the change in their relationship. And so yes, there is jealousy; yes, there is a change in the relationship; and one has affected the other. So that's the first part of that. And two, the biggest thing in polyamorous relationships that people have to remember is that there are boundaries that you have to have in place. And when one person is crossing those

boundaries, that's when issues will come in the most. Not that you won't ever have any jealousy, you know, just because in a polyamorous relationship, but that's usually where things come in, is that either expectations haven't been met, or boundaries have been crossed, and people aren't taking responsibilities for those things. So it sounds like the partner has crossed a boundary that either they discussed, or maybe they haven't discussed, and that's something that they need to take a moment to discuss.

Karen Yates

Mmhmm. Peter, what do you have to say?

Peter Navarro

Just to go right off what you're saying there, Erica, about the discussion, whether or not they had one or not — it sounds like something was happening pre-pandemic, something happened during pandemic, and now something's happening after the pandemic. And so it'd be interesting to just look at the form, take a zoom out for a moment, because I think what happens when we cohabitate is, we can start to build up stories about what we expect from our other, without letting the other know that we're expecting that from them. So these cohabitation conversations are really, really important to have together before we move in. And another thing that I want to talk about is the nuance of jealousy. I think we often will call something jealousy. And I always wonder, "Well, is it jealousy? Or is it envy?" I'd like to describe what those two feelings are, in my opinion, and see how they land for folks. Because I think there is a nuance between jealousy and envy.

Karen Yates

Yeah, let's talk about it.

Peter Navarro

I think jealousy is when we think we're going to lose something. And I think envy is when we wish we had the thing we're seeing. And so, I wonder about the person who wrote in this question — if they're jealous, or they're envious.

Karen Yates

You mean, like, here the world is, you know, in some areas, opening back up; the partner has got someone suddenly that they're interested in, ready to jump back into a polyamorous way of life, and the other partner is maybe not dating anyone currently, and looking. So that's what you're getting at?

Peter Navarro

That's right. That's right.

Karen Yates

That's really interesting. Jason, what are some of your thoughts?

Jason Best

I mean, I was having trouble actually even hearing the prompt, because all I was listening to was "I'm in the danger zone" being played at max volume. This relationship, I think, is in the danger zone a bit. And there's a lot of things that are clues to that. Our practice, Best Therapies, is seeing a flood of couples right now. Like, we've always gotten a number of couples. But we've had such an influx of couples at the tail end of the pandemic. And I think part of it could be here. And I don't know for sure, of course, I don't know these people; I haven't interviewed them. I haven't talked to them. But there's a lot of people that had this kind of forced closeness during the pandemic. It's like, "Hey, I can only hang out with you, you're the only safe person I know, or we've decided to make a pod together. So suddenly, we're seeing each other all the time." There were a lot of couples that did move in during that time, because they're like, I want human contact regularly, and this seems like a safe way to do it, as opposed to jumping back and forth between places and putting ourselves at risk. Now that the world is opening up, though, some of those constraints that might have pressured that intimacy, or accelerated it in certain ways, maybe deformed it, in certain ways, is now being relieved. In some cases, people are like, Oh, great, I can be around you less. I'm going to really jump out into the world and go in a very different direction. Dating someone suddenly, who is monogamous. And also the implication in the prompt was that they were living together, and now they are not living together. Like there's suddenly this decrease in intimacy, and this new partner, and the new partner is saying, "Yeah, my preference would be you not date anyone." At least that's the metacommunication around the monogamy piece. And the fact that the person's like, yeah, I've been telling them, they're really angry at them, I can think of them as an asshole. I don't know if this person is an asshole. But there is certainly some issues happening within the relationship that it doesn't sound like they're being discussed, or maybe not being discussed fully. And that's, I think, the root cause of the jealousy. I think a lot of times jealousy is based off of deprivation or deep insecurity. If you're really solid in your relationship, there's a lot of folks that absolutely can be poly and be very happy, date 100 people, but then you add some insecurity, like, "Hey, is this attachment actually secure? Is this person going to be here tomorrow? Do I trust them? They're saying that they're in a relationship with someone, or starting a relationship with someone, they could be an existential threat to our relationship." And

it sounds like "Oh, don't worry about it. Oh, it's fine." And again, I don't know for sure. That's just how the prompt made it sound. And so the fact that the person's reacting to that I think is normal. I think it makes a lot of sense. And I think it's one of the things where it needs to be examined. Like, okay, where are you guys now? Because ultimately, it probably isn't so much about this other person as about what's going on with the two of you. And is there maybe this fallout post-pandemic, and all the stress and trauma that we all experienced through that?

Karen Yates

Yeah, I hear you. Because I mean, I do know of poly people who have podded together in a particular locale, and I've always thought like, wow, that's intense. That's an intense way to go about it. But we are living in intense times, right? Erica or Peter, thoughts?

Erica Washington

Well, anytime you go from life living separately to living together, that creates a much more intimate relationship. And so there's different rules, different expectations for people who you live with, versus someone who lives in a completely different setting. And so once they got into that new setting, of them being in basically like a nesting partnership almost, they needed to come up with the rules for that nesting partnership and how it would end, how they would transition out of it, how permanent was this? And I remember reading that they were the primary partner, which is one thing, but it's different from the primary partner also being a nesting partner. And so there's just so much more that goes into it, that people need to update their expectations each time they're starting to make a transition. And like Jason said, it's not that this person is having an abnormal reaction to what is happening; it's just that they're having this reaction, because there's something that they're feeling in their self, that like, this just doesn't feel right for what we're supposed to be having. And whether they communicated that or not makes a huge difference. But also, if they didn't communicate that,, okay, what are you going to do now to communicate that you are feeling jealous, that this is crossing certain boundaries of yours, and what you all need to do going forward? Because it sounds, like he said, this is in a danger zone. It really is. So they have to really decide, okay, what's our next move? What's the move we're making together with the move we're making with other partners, and just kind of keep going from there.

Karen Yates

Yeah. Peter, do you have a thought?

Peter Navarro

Yeah. I mean, I think, just to continue to highlight the need for communication if we're going to cohabitate with another person. It's just, it's so necessary. And we're not perfect beings, right? We can always have these conversations. Sometimes it's trial and error, we get in the house, and we discover things. And so I think when we're cohabitating, we really are allowing an excavation of sorts, not only of ourselves, but of the relationship. To think of the relationship as a third entity in the home can be a nice way to do that excavation. We're really vulnerable with each other in space, whether we talk about it or not. There's nonverbal communication that's going on. There's verbal communication that's going on. There's these unspoken expectations. Maybe there's expectations that we do speak. There's a lot that comes with cohabitating. And so I just want to continue to highlight communication as really, really important if we're going to have successful living spaces together.

Karen Yates

Yeah, you know, something you said earlier, it struck me. Like, the stories — sometimes we tell more stories about the partners we're living with, than when we're living apart. Because I think when we live apart from someone, it's like, oh, I know the responsibility is on me to communicate and check things out, and blah, blah, blah. But it's like, when you're living with someone, there's almost this built in assumption of like, oh, it's cool. The person is sitting across the room from me, I can see them right there. I'm gonna project the hell onto them! I got these stories going, the stories are correct, because look at the way they're holding the lemonade glass! Or look at the — I don't know, it's like, it can be kind of a weird Hall of Mirrors when you are living with someone. And I think communication is even more critical.

Jason Best

And I'm curious what this couple would have communicated before they moved in, about moving in. And if it was intentional, that it was going to be just for the pandemic; if it was a trial balloon and kind of see where things go. Again, the fact that they moved in and then moved apart might have been exactly what was known from the beginning. And it might not have been. But I'm curious how it was communicated, and particularly, how they've been communicating it since, around the emotional fallout from some of that. Because I think there were couples that planned on like, hey, just for the pandemic, we'll move in together. And then they move apart, and it was always the plan, but it hits them harder than they expected. Emotionally, they just weren't quite ready for it.

Karen Yates

Yeah.

Peter Navarro

That kind of reminds me about whether this is jealousy or fear of abandonment. What you just said there, Jason.

Karen Yates

Sometimes I think jealousy — some of the roots are fear of abandonment.

Jason Best

Frequently, yeah.

Peter Navarro

Definitely.

Jason Best

I think that emotional security, you know, that emotional attachment, being at risk suddenly can meet people who are normally very chill, very unchill.

Karen Yates

Do you think that a poly person can be with a monogamous person? Sometimes maybe the primary partnership can be that way, and the monogamous person is actually okay with a partner being polyamorous. What's your feeling about the mono-poly dynamic?

Jason Best

I think it really depends on the flavor of mono. Because I think there is mono where it's like, "I have no interest in dating anyone else ever. I only want to fall in love with one person. But what that person does, I'm less concerned with." And there are definitely lots of couples like that, where it's like, "Yeah, the thought of dating someone else makes me want to throw myself through a window. But you going out and having a good time is great. Good for you. I don't really care that much." There's also, I think the next gradient would be, maybe people that are like, "Eh, it bothers me a little bit, but not a big deal. Really, I'm fine with it." Kind of work through those feelings. And then I think there's also the people that are like, "This desperately bothers me, I seriously hate this, I only want you to be with me and not anyone else. But I guess I'll put up with it, because you tell me that I can't be with you any other way." I think that's a very, very

hard situation to be in. And that would be something — if one of my partners said their new partner was in that camp, I would certainly be worried

Erica Washington

I would definitely be concerned about a partner wanting to be with a monogamous person, because that can definitely interrupt the partnership. And so it can bring in that jealousy, bring in that envy, or those kinds of things, because now it's like, "Okay, well, is this person really poly? Or were they..." Like, it brings in this mistrust almost, because it's like, okay, is this person really poly, or were they just trying to be in this relationship with me to try something out, and now they have this monogamous person over here, that they're wanting to be in a relationship with now? And because maybe I'm not in the place to provide that for them, now our relationship is in a bit of jeopardy. So you know, you have those feelings that are going to come up, like, okay, is this what this person really wants? And they just tolerated me? Or what's really going on? So there's a lot of different thoughts that can come up and cause that jealousy or that envy to happen in a person. And I think, you know, when people are getting into these relationships, they really need to check themselves, to say, okay, am I getting into this because I'm just trying this out? Or am I getting into this, because this is the real lifestyle that I want to have? And going to be with someone who's monogamous, they need to understand that they could definitely put a strain on both sides of the relationship, because that person may be compromising, as Jason said. And I don't believe in compromise. That's something I always tell people. Like, I don't believe in compromise, I believe in everyone getting their needs met. And when everyone's not getting their needs met, that's when resentment starts to set in. And so you're gonna have this happen in these types of relationships, because there's somebody's needs that are not going to get met. And the resentment is then going to start to come in and cause a lot of ugly issues. So the person who is even looking into getting into a relationship with that monogamous person needs to keep that in mind, that they could be setting up some issues, not only within that monogamous person, but also the polyamorous person that they're partnering with as well.

Peter Navarro

I want to say I think polyam and mono relationships can absolutely work. I've seen it, it's doable, and it takes a lot. And I think, to name that for ourselves can be useful as we navigate those waters. I think what comes up in these relationship styles is power and privilege. And what do we do with that power that we're harnessing? And it's interesting, this idea of needs. I think, on some level, I agree with you, Erica, that I think our needs do need to be met in relationships. And I also take an anarchist approach to it sometimes, because I wonder about our needs. I wonder how we're getting those

met. I wonder if we always need to get the thing we think we need met. And so I challenge everyone to really think about that, when they're talking about any kind of relationship style they're going to go into. Can you resolve a conflict? And does that get the need met? What does it mean to get our needs met, is really what I'm getting at here.

Karen Yates

We'll return in a moment with question two, about being solo poly and dealing with an established couple. Wild & Sublime is supported in part by our Sublime Supporter, Full Color Life Therapy, therapy for all of you, at fullcolorlifetherapy.com. And you might have heard me talk in the past few episodes about Biofield Tuning, a type of work I do using frequency to help folks get unstuck, and thought to yourself, what is that? Biofield tuning gently restores energetic flow and shifts emotional patterning in the body, bringing greater awareness of yourself and the choices you can make, and it can be done remotely. Go to karen-yates.com, or the show notes to learn more about individual or group sessions, or just about biofield tuning in general. And now, time for the second question with Erica Washington, Jason Best and Peter Navarro.

Okay, question number two, similar yet different. "Hello, esteemed panel. I'd like your advice. I'm single and want to experiment with open relationships and date many people instead of getting on the relationship escalator. I'm attracted to a guy who has a partner; they are both poly. I told him I'd like to date him. He's into the idea. His partner wants us all to talk together. I keep putting off getting together because it seems like a weird interview. I don't want to have a relationship with that person, just him. I know there's all sorts of types of poly relationships, but I don't know if I'm ready for this level of... intensity, I guess I'd call it. Is this a typical thing? Do you have some thoughts? Signed, Beginner Mind."

Peter Navarro

Juicy juicy!

Karen Yates

Yeah.

Peter Navarro

So juicy.

Karen Yates

Peter, have at it.

Peter Navarro

Oh, sure. This dynamic comes up a lot. I see it all the time. I want to date this person. But this person doesn't want to let me in. They have the power. Right, coming back to that power and privilege that we were just naming. Again, this is about navigation. And how are we navigating? What are we navigating? I think if we're in a situation where we're wanting to date one person that's in a coupledness, is what I like to call it, that relationship has to have a say if that's the agreement that's already situated between that coupledness. So unfortunately, I say to this writer, you're gonna have to have some hard conversations. Here they come, and are you ready?

Karen Yates

[sing-song] Here comes poly-amor-y!

Peter Navarro

Yeah, absolutely. 100%, the scary monster that is relating to more than one.

Karen Yates

But what about the fact that when you read a lot of books on polyamory, they're sort of along the lines — at least all the ones that I've read — look, the minute you try to put down rules, rule structures around the polyamory thing, you start out as a primary monogamous relationship, and you open it up. And one partner is like, I've got these rules. I don't want you to date redheads, I want you to come home every night at 10pm. I want to have a pass or play on every single partner you see. And every book will say, Hey, you know, at a certain point that's gonna go straight out the window, because that's bullshit. Because people are people. I mean, what do you have to say about that? The rule structures.

Erica Washington

One of the biggest things that I work — literally, probably with everyone that I work with in therapy — is boundaries. And the biggest thing is, people don't even realize they're supposed to have boundaries a lot of times, and that it's okay to have boundaries, and that a lot of times, their boundaries are being crossed. And they don't even necessarily understand that's what's happening with them, and why they're so angry about whatever is going on. So let's look at this person. This person wants to be in an open relationship — that's great. But now they're trying to date someone who's a part of a partnership already. So they have to abide by the rules that that partnership has created already, or they need to go with someone who's not in a partnership, if they don't want to have to abide by those rules like that. If you're joining a company,

you have to go by that company's rules. You can't just come in there and just do whatever you want. You have to come in see what's okay, what's not okay, and get everything set up like that. And it surprises me that there aren't more conversations about needing more rules, because in reality, people — yes, we are people, we're humans, we're going to do things. But as long as we don't have boundaries, we're going to overstep people's comfort zones on a regular basis. And that is a huge setup for disaster. So you really have to have those rules, and you have to be firm about them. Because not having those boundaries, it sets up all kinds of different behaviors and responses that people are receiving now, because they haven't had those conversations. They haven't thought about how their partner might react in these situations and nobody — this isn't something they've necessarily come across before. So because they've never talked about it, now the relationships are on thin ice basically, or you know, a thin string, because these are uncharted territories that nobody ever thought they would need to have a conversation about.

Jason Best

This is a fun case. So first of all, great that they are single and ready to mingle. Yeah, it's an opportunity to kind of examine how they want to enter poly. The things that I heard that were really great — I heard that they are looking to hook up with experienced people. Big thumbs up there. I think if you're brand new, that's a great way to do it. Sometimes people who are really inexperienced and dating other people who are inexperienced, or dating maybe people that are, you know, monogamous, but yeah, whatever, I'll give it a try this one time. It's a bit messier. Having someone who's a little experienced, who can talk you through some of it, can be helpful. I actually would say in this case, yeah, there's a thing called a couples' privilege. And so that's a little bit what this person is bumping up against. There is an established relationship already. They have some established agreements. I would actually disagree that you can't try and negotiate with that. Like, I would absolutely, if this person is really uncomfortable about having that conversation with the other partner, before maybe going on a date or having a coffee just to see if there's chemistry or whatever, then I would say, ask for that. Like, they can say no. They can say no, that really doesn't make us comfortable. This is really what we need. But 100% of the time you don't ask to get your needs met, it's unlikely they're going to get met. So why not go for it, ask for what you're looking for. If they're still doing that, this person couched it as like, well, I really, it makes me very nervous by going in for an interview. I wouldn't think of it as an interview. This is a meeting. You're talking to this person, you're trying to make your mind up. If this is a system, a relationship that you want to enter, people that you're going to like. This is the possibility of a new friend. A lot of metamours become great friends. And it's not an accident that a lot of people have a type. And sometimes those

types have a lot of things in common when people are dating. So that can be really cool. It also can be a great way to gauge like, Hey, is this going to be problematic? Is this person going to be controlling or weird, or have a ton of strange rules down the road? I would disagree with something — well, not even disagree. I would just add to something you said, Karen. You said that a lot of these books say eventually you get to the point where a lot of the rules go out the window. I think you're always going to need some rules. In my experience, what's really common is that early on, people will have more rules, more requests, more guidelines, right? But that's also a comfort thing. It's like, hey, I want to know that I can trust you, that you're not going to immediately — like I say, "Please, the one person I don't want you to date is someone with red hair," and the very next person you bring home with somebody with red hair. Or, can you please come on with ten, and then you're like, "Fuck you, I'm here at three o'clock, suck it!" Like, okay, that's going to indicate that you're not really working to meet me halfway. But if you're willing to maybe put up with some of that, and it's fine, and everything's cool, maybe the anxiety drops. And in my anecdotal experience, at least, I see this all the time in couples, where there'll be so many rules, then they'll see like, yeah, they went out with this person. It was fine. They were aboveboard. Everything was cool. They came home and they cuddled me. And we watched Matlock together, because that's our secret fetish. Everything works out well. And then after a while, their anxiety drops. And it's like, Yeah, I don't care how late you're out, I don't care if you're dating a redhead. It doesn't matter to me anymore.

Karen Yates

Well, this is really interesting. I like the way you put a spin on that about the rules, because honestly, I just do hear a lot of this, like, "don't have too many rules, because that's blah, blah, blah." But I like this idea of like, yeah, they're malleable. And the reason they do fall by the wayside is that trust is established/ But what I want to get in is something I think Erica was getting at. What's the difference between a rule and a boundary? Is there a difference? Because I think there's a difference.

Peter Navarro

I think a rule is what you do, based on what someone's asking you. And I think a boundary is what you do based on what someone's asking you or what you ask of yourself. So I think boundaries are both external, internal. And I think often when we talk about boundaries, we're talking about boundaries put on people, but we can actually have a dialogue about what boundaries do you have internally for yourself? I don't know if you're familiar with that. Like right now, I just notice a lot of folks being like, well, they didn't respect my boundary. Okay. Well, did you respect your boundary? Right, so we're quick to place it onto someone else?

Karen Yates
Mm hmm. Yeah.

Erica Washington

The biggest thing that I would say would be the difference between rules and boundaries is that usually rules are, as you said, they're not really malleable. They're rigid. This is the rule, you follow this. This is where we go. Boundaries, a lot of times, they change over time, and they change with different people. So you won't have the same boundaries with your primary partner that you have with the secondary partner, or with your metamour, or your nesting partner. Those will all be different boundaries that you would have. And they might change over time, because of trust built, as Jason was saying — like, once you build a trust, your boundaries might change a little bit, because that person has shown you that if a boundary or if something is happening, that they're going to respect you in that boundary, they're going to follow it regardless of whether it's a stare steadfast rule or not, or something like that. And so you might, because you become comfortable with that person, you might just not be as strict. Your boundaries might just become a little bit more porous sometimes with that person, because you know that you can trust that person with that boundary, and that they won't go too far, I would say, across that boundary, even if they cross it a little bit. And so that's the biggest thing that I would say, if I look at — like, if I hear the word "rule," I'm thinking that that's something very rigid. You know, and not that boundaries can't be rigid, because they very well can be. But when I think of rules, that's what I think of something's rigid, that's not changing. When I think of boundaries, I think of something that has the ability to change based on how our relationship progresses.

Karen Yates
Mm hmm.

Peter Navarro

Sounds like rules — what you're saying, Erica — it sounds like rules are, I have no option, and boundaries are, I have options. That's what I hear when you say that.

Karen Yates
Yeah.

Jason Best

I'm always like, I don't know, I'm always of the opinion, I think you can change everything. Nothing feels too, too rigid to me. Except that I would say, and this is where

I think rules go bad, right? Like, I think exactly what you're saying, Erica, applies to those rules. Like sometimes people will have maybe an emotional need. And I think a lot of boundaries are really based on emotional needs. Like, I need security, I need safety, I need to feel the sense of connection. And then oftentimes, the rules hopefully are supporting the boundaries if they're having those kinds of discussions. But they can also be about punishment. Like, I'm going to not allow you out ever, you can't go out after eight o'clock, because you've upset me by dating the wrong person. Like that's just a really poorly applied behavioral activation around an emotional need. Like this is, I'm trying to control you or punish you or make you feel bad through an ugly kind of rule. But I think rules can be great. I think girls can be flexible. I think boundaries can be flexible and great. But I tend to think of them a little bit more as about the behavioral side or the emotional side, if that makes sense.

Karen Yates

So one thing I wanted to ask you all is, here we have like a newbie, solo polyamorous person here to the poly pool. And can you all give some of your best advice to someone who's new to polyamory? I'm not talking about an established couple. I'm talking about solo folks. Like, how do people empower themselves, entering into this completely new type of way of relating, which can be kind of a mindfuck?

Peter Navarro

Mindfuck, indeed. My response to that, Karen, would be, I think, when we're playing around — maybe playing around isn't the right phrase, but I'm going to go with it — playing around with our identity, we can have a tendency to move towards an idealized version of ourselves. And we kind of lose sight of what's going on in the moment. And so I think that can be cause for reflection, if I'm going to be entering into this pool. Do I need some floaties? What are my floaties going to be? Do I need a snorkel? What's the snorkel going to be? Basically, what tools do I have in place for me to have success in swimming in this pool? And if not even swimming, floating? Can I just float here? So I can see what's going on? How do I feel about it? Is this right for me, because in a sense, we're trying on something we haven't tried on before. And it might be too tight. might be too loose, but we won't know until we're in. Right? I always say going back to the rules. Sometimes we have to go in to get out of something. So sometimes we got to go into that rule to get out of the rule. That makes sense. So I'm going to go into this pool so that I can get out and dry myself off.

Karen Yates

Hello, I love this very complex metaphor. I'm like, what's the snorkel? Let's see. The snorkel would be like a best friend, a best friend who's polyamorous... Okay! Erica or Jason, what are your pieces of advice for the solo polyamorous person?

Erica Washington

Well, what helped me, and that's what I'll go with, what helped me when I first got into the community was finding other people in that community that had more experience. Not necessarily trying to partner with them, but just finding a friend that could give me information. I joined a couple communities on Facebook, and you get to learn a lot of the terminology very quickly. You get to learn a lot of like, who is predatory, who is not; you get to learn a lot of things by joining some of those communities, and even though they may be annoying at times, because you see all these things posted, and you're reading them and you're like, "Oh, is this really what I want to get into?" But it does give you a lot of information, that this is not something that's just simple to get into, you have to plan, just like you plan any part of your life. You have to go out there, you plan your experiences as much as possible. Of course, you're not trying to control everything. So that's not what I mean when I say plan it. But you want to go in and you want to have the information that you need. You want to learn terminology, so that if somebody's talking to you about getting into any of these different types of relationships, you know what they're talking about, and they're not selling you a dream, right? So you want to have the information first. But you also want to have people who are genuinely willing to give you information and talk to you about it. So like I have a lot of people who come into therapy because they're getting into it. And they're like, you know, I don't really don't know how to navigate this. And I saw that you work with people who are in polyamorous relationships. So can you help me figure this out? And so I kind of helped them understand like, what are you actually looking for? What are your expectations out of these different relationships? What do you need to put in place so that you can protect yourself, and everybody else who are in these different partnerships that you're looking to get into. So if you can find someone, be it a friend in the community, or a professional that can guide you, that I feel like would be very helpful, because if you just go into it blind, you're going to go into a lot of things that you are not looking to get into. And it's not going to be the best experience. And you're going to start thinking negatively about polyamory because you got into it in a really negative manner. So I really feel as though joining the communities and seeing what's happening in those communities is a really good way to get started.

Jason Best

I think one would be and this is maybe going to be a weird sideways thing. But we do that well on the show. I was just thinking about how when I was — back when I thought I was monogamous — I once went on a date with a woman. Weird, little bit, a little bit odd throughout the night. And then I realized she'd asked me to come to the steak house, and I was ordering food, and she was like, "No, I'm good, I'm good." I'm like, "Oh, I'm sorry. Did you already eat? Should we have done something else?" "Oh, no, this is fine. I just don't eat any food or drink any water outside of my house." And I was like, "Oh." "Because I only want to use the bathroom ever at my house. So I would never do that outside of my house." Huh... Huh. Okay, okay. It was a very weird date, and ultimately was definitely not a success. And also the fact that it wasn't a success didn't mean that monogamy as a concept was dead. I think sometimes people start to experiment with poly, and they go out on a date with someone who's kinda weird or a little off, or there's something on and they're like, ah, maybe this isn't gonna ever work for me. And they get up in their head. The reality is, this is a an option for how you're going to live. So if you're looking to explore these types of relationships, know that just like in the monogamous world, you're probably going to go on some weird dates. There's probably going to be times — like maybe this couple earlier, you meet with them and they're amazing and wonderful, and it is this life-changing positive experience. And maybe it's super weird. And if it's super weird, that doesn't mean that you can't do this. It means keep exploring. keep finding the right people like there are great people in this community. I love Erica's suggestion. One of the big things that I'll tell people when they start is: build community. Look for friends, look for groups online. The Chicago poly meetup groups are really great. A lot of people hook up — and not just, I mean, they do hook up, but also people meet up as friends and community through them.

Karen Yates

[with faux shock] It's not just a meat market, Jason! It's a way to meet friends!

Jason Best

That's right. Wait, did you say M-E-E-T friends, or M-E-A-T friends? Wanted to make sure. But then there's also I think just general research. I'll oftentimes recommend people read "Opening Up," I'll recommend people look at "The Ethical Slut." If they don't have the time and/or energy and/or attention span for that, there's lots of YouTube videos that will condense elements of those books. Sometimes just getting a little bit of a glimpse of what this could be and having some ideas of your own before just starting something off with maybe an experienced partner who's telling you how it should go. You know, like it's always hard to trust — is that totally right? There may be

things that they're flavoring with their own perspective that wouldn't be considered just a straight up rule or guideline about how the stuff is supposed to go? The more educated you are about it, I think the better it will go. And then finally, I think it's just about making sure that there's always something in it for you. And I'm not talking about being greedy or selfish. Compersion is the thing that can be in it for you. But going into it with a, okay, if my partner has a date, that's not a night just for me to feel lonely and sad. That's going to be a night where maybe I make myself a great meal. I watch all of the bullshit anime that they don't want to watch when they're around. I do the geekiest, nerdiest things that they're not into. And then they come back and I clear away my D&D character stuff and we hang out.

Karen Yates

MmmMmm! Excellent. I wanted to thank our esteemed panel tonight — Peter Navarro, Erica Washington and Jason Best. Thank you soooo much. I really enjoyed this conversation! For more information on Jason Best, Peter Navarro, and Erica Washington, go to the show notes. To read up on polyamory with the books mentioned — "Ethical Slut," "Opening Up," and my recommendation, "The Smart Girl's Guide to Polyamory" — check out our Bookshop link. Help Wild & Sublime and independent booksellers.

Well, that's it folks have a very pleasurable week. [Music up] Next week, some fun announcements! Thank you for listening. If you know someone who might be interested in this episode, send it to them. Do you like what you heard? Then give us a nice review on your podcast app. You can follow us on social media @wildandsublime and sign up for newsletters at wildandsublime.com. I'd like to thank associate producer Julia Williams and design guru Jean-Francois Gervais. Theme Music by David Ben-Porat. This episode was edited by The Creative Imposter studios. Our media sponsor is Rebellious Magazine, feminist media, at rebelliousmagazine.com.