



**Wild & Sublime® Podcast, Season 2 Episode 37**  
**"My partner is a flirt!" & ENM dilemma**  
**August 26, 2021**

**"My partner is a flirt. He says this is who he is..." Panelists answer a frustrated listener's question on different social styles within a couple. Plus, the sticky wicket of starting a nonmonogamy convo in an established relationship.**

**Host: Karen Yates**

**Guests: Mark Vaughan, Diane Long, Tazima Parris**

[Wild & Sublime theme music]

Mark Vaughan

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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.

Today, our panel answers questions about how to deal with a partner's flirting, and how to introduce someone to ethical nonmonogamy. Keep listening.

It's our podcast birthday month, and we're coming down to the last few days of our special birthday bonus for our Afterglow members on Patreon. Members, from \$5 a month on up, get access to our full length webinar, "Butt Basics," with sex educator

Ren Grabert and myself, our intro to posterior play that will answer all of your questions and allay any anxieties. New and existing members can watch this video 'til August 31. Help support our work bringing sex positive insights, news and conversations out into the world. You'll get bonus content like Q&A sessions with sexperts, my audio creator notes, special announcements, and more. If a monthly membership is not your thing, consider throwing some bucks in the tip jar in appreciation for our work. More info is in the show notes.

Hello, folks. Oh, flirting. It's cool if it's you doing the flirting, out in the great wide world, but maybe not so cool if it's your partner doing the same. A number of months ago on Patreon, we got this question from a member. It's not the most outlandish sex or relationship question — but oh-so-relatable. We'll also be tackling a second question later in this episode about ethical nonmonogamy and how to discuss opening up an established relationship with a resistant partner. You'll hear from sex coach Tazima Parris to start us off, as well as sex therapist Mark Vaughan; and somatic educator, body worker, and empowerment self defense teacher, Diane Long. Enjoy.

"My partner is a flirt. Everywhere we go, he engages in behavior that seems a little over the top for me. I will come back from the bathroom at a party or barbecue, and he will have taken up with a small crowd and be engaged, usually with a woman, in conversation that seems to have some sort of undertone that is not necessarily sexual, but, quote, overly friendly. When I bring it up to him, he encourages me to be flirty, too. He says this is who he is. I'm at a loss. Do I try being a flirt when it's not in my nature? Just accept it? I'm tired of being pissed off."

Tazima Parris

So much emotion. So many feelings. And I feel you. I really, really get this. So, the first place I want to start with this question is talking specifically about flirting. And the way I hold flirting is that flirting is actually about spreading around our energy. So, babies flirt. They totally flirt. Flirting is sort of in our nature, in general. It's when you make eye contact, or it's even that energy when, for example, you and a friend are doing something irresponsible, like going shopping, when both of you have other things to do. There's a flirtation when you're kind of, you know, being conspirators about whatever it is. Okay? So I want to level the playing field with the flirtatiousness. He has a particular style of flirtation that feels like there is a sexual undertone, or something in it that has you feeling uncomfortable, and I really, really, really get and understand that. I would not encourage you to flirt in the style that he flirts in. However, I would encourage you to think about becoming more turned on yourself. So, it's not about out-flirting him. What he's doing is actually spreading his turn-on around, and he

happens to be kind of practiced at it, because he's probably been doing this for many decades. And so, if you cultivated a certain amount of turn-on — like when you get excited about whatever your area of expertise is, okay, or whatever you feel really geeky about, or you can kind of go way deep on a subject that you really love — that energy. And then you can take that energy and spread it around. It just so happens that our sexual energy happens to be some of the most creative, potent energy that we can wield. It's more powerful than anything else. It's attached to sex, and that stuff makes babies. It's powerful! [laughter] So, I wouldn't encourage anyone to tamp it down. I would encourage: one, understand what flirting actually is — as long as your partner isn't actively pursuing someone outside of the container of agreements that you have about your relationship. So, if he's not breaking any rules about how far he's going, with whomever it is, then it's a different conversation. It's about where your comfort level is. And that's okay. And my encouragement to you moreso is to cultivate that turn-on energy in yourself, so that you can spread it around and see how that feels for you — in your own signature, flirty style.

Karen Yates

Awesome, awesome. Mark and Diane, what do you have to say?

Mark Vaughan

I think the thing that keeps on coming into my mind is: Is it about trust? And when it comes down to it, is this a person that you can trust? If it's not, then I think you've got your answer right there. But if this is a person you can trust, then can you accept their behavior? Can you accept them for who they are? And can you allow them, give them the gift of allowing them to be who they are and accepting them? I like what Tazima said about finding your own sexual energy. Where can you bring yourself into that? I think that's really important as well.

Diane Long

Yeah. So it sounds like he's very comfortable with his style of flirtation. He's very comfortable with flirting. Like, it doesn't seem to be a problem for him. And for the person who wrote in speaking, you know, what I heard was, 'It feels over the top for me. I'm tired of being pissed off.' And I feel like there's some emotional content there that, you know, maybe needs to be explored. Because jumping to a 'Why don't you flirt more?' If there's no, 'I'm hearing that it feels like too much for you; what's coming up for you?' Is their insecurity, and worries about desirability? Is this creating unrealistic expectations in other people? Like, what are the impacts of that? And if there aren't sort of negative impacts on other people, just what's going on with you? I feel like that would help, to share something about what you're feeling and to have a partner — like,

if I were coaching a partner, I would say, you know, actively offer reassurance about the fact that you are going to respect those boundaries, whatever that is. And then, is it also fun to bring a partner into something? Sometimes, you know, inviting your partner over and saying, 'Hey, you know, so-and-so I really likes this thing. We love to do that too,' or something like, you know, extending the flirtation to include your partner, can also feel nice. Especially if somebody is maybe not as comfortable flirting and engaging in that way. But I think for the partner who's flirting to acknowledge, this feels a little bit threatening, and how can I make this less threatening for you? Because this is me, and this feels good to me, and I don't want to have to change, but I also want to respect you and what you need to feel like you're cared about and seen, and that you're part of my life. And so, I think there's a way to grow it together a little bit.

Karen Yates

Yeah, I really liked that response, Diane. I love every response with this question, because I do hear, like, underneath there might be this trust issue. So then, determining, is it really a trust issue? Or is it a 'me' issue? Could be both, a both issue. It could be a complicated thing. But staying in the resentment is problematic. Like, if this is a thing, if this is a loop that just keeps going, keeps going, then eventually it is going to be buried, and come out in a really ugly way. Or it'll be, like, some straw that breaks the camel's back, and then you're out of there, and that didn't necessarily have to happen. So watching one's own insecurities and excavating them can be super helpful.

[to podcast listener] We'll resume with the second question in a moment. I will be appearing next week on a free Zoom gathering hosted by Rebellious Magazine, our media sponsor, celebrating divorce. Yes. Have you just terminated a long-term relationship? Come and share your story, get tips and more, at The Divorce Party. All orientations and gender expressions are welcome. There will be cool giveaways, too. Tuesday, August 31 at 7pm Central Time. More info is in the show notes.

Wild & Sublime is also sponsored in part by our Sublime Supporter, Chicago-based Full Color Life Therapy. Therapy for all of you at [fullcolorlifetherapy.com](http://fullcolorlifetherapy.com). If you would like to be a Sublime Supporter, showcasing you and your business and supporting us at the same time, contact us at [info@wildandsublime.com](mailto:info@wildandsublime.com).

We now return with a question from Patreon member Gabrielle. Again, you'll be hearing from Tazima Parris, Diane Long, and Mark Vaughan, who will start us off.

[reading] "Would you speak in general: how to best navigate coming out as nonmonogamous towards a very hesitant monogamous partner, in a very committed and loving relationship. For example, how to gently address the, quote, 'deep punch in the gut feeling,' unquote, my partner — monogamous so far — experiences when he thinks of me being sexually physical with another human being, or how to possibly explore past the traditional negative narratives around open relationships. We are struggling and on the brink of breaking up around the differences of what we see as liberation through soul explorations. He is very satisfied finding this in his artwork. I, in coming out as nonmonogamous, feel the need to explore without any conceptual boundaries." And I will say that I slightly edited this down. But that is, again, from Gabrielle. So, Mark, have at it.

Mark Vaughan

Oh, first that is a big question, and a great question. As I was thinking about it, my first thought was really: Be patient. Because, for a lot of these things, we've had a lot of time to process internally, where our partners may not have had that time. And so, we need to give them some time to catch up, so to speak. And for a lot of things — like, I think with that 'deep punch in the gut' feeling, you know, a lot of people, this brings up attachment issues, right? And the idea of their partner being with somebody else feels like a huge threat. You know, I remember the first time a partner asked me about it, if I wanted to be in an open relationship, and I kind of went, "Yeah! It can be so open, you won't know I'm even in it!" I'm like, no way. And thinking back, though, there were already some attachment issues with that relationship. When I got into another relationship, where it was more secure, I thought, yeah, that can be alright. When I started processing through more of it, it felt safer to be able to explore that for me. So, a lot of reassurance to your partner. A lot of reassurance that it's about you and not about them, so to speak. Clearly, they're involved. Reassurance, reassurance, reassurance. That definitely helps. The other part of that is also that, what does it bring up for them? Is it insecurity for them? Do they feel inadequate? And it's back to the reassurance. But also trying to understand their 'why?' What is at the core for them? Is it a belief that monogamy is how things should be? Is it a fear or insecurity that can be addressed? Or is it just a value that they hold? Do they feel that monogamy is a value that they can't step out of? The answers are going to tell you a lot. I think, on that, you know, having hard conversations is a part of being in a healthy relationship. Being willing to say, "Hey, this is my truth. Where are you?" And to negotiate that is a life skill that I think we all need. Along with that though, you need to understand that this might be a deal breaker. Right? They may not be able to get past it. And then it comes down to you, to a choice of: Can you accept being in a monogamous relationship? Or is that something that's going to build resentment over time? Because if it is, then you got to

realize, what you need to do at that point. Because being in a relationship long-term with building and building is not a healthy place to live.

Karen Yates

Mmm. Wow, thanks, Mark. That's a very gentle response. I really, really resonated with a lot that you said. So, Tazima and Diane, jump in.

Diane Long

I want to underscore the part about really getting clear on whether it's a deal breaker. For some people, this is a lifestyle choice. And if you're not choosing a person who is at least open to the lifestyle choice that is important to you, then it's time to consider what action you want to do. Especially if extensive conversations have happened. The other piece is, there are a lot of books and resources that actually talk about this process of coming out. And one of the things that helped me to introduce my partner to more about nonmonogamy was to say, "Hey, could you listen to this audiobook on nonmonogamy, ethical nonmonogamy, and tell me what you think?" More so than "I want this lifestyle." And I'm not putting out any, like, ultimatums. I'm like, hey, I want to share with you what is important to me about nonmonogamy — not "I want to have sex with other people." It's, there are some qualities, specifically for me, about nonmonogamy that I really appreciate, and I would like to incorporate some of those ideas into our conversation. That's my personal conversation. You can use a tool like an audiobook or an article, and open a conversation about it. So that it's not all about the big, high-stakes question of, "Are we going to do this or not?" It's actually more about what is important to each person about relationship in general. And then, what do each of the parties, or any of the parties, value inside of their preferred relationship style?

Karen Yates

Diane?

Diane Long

Yeah. I would add, I think taking the time to really figure out what's important to you. You know, what it is that you want and need, and to be really explicit where you can, in communicating and figuring that out. Mark mentioned patience, but I think a lot of space, to really explore and share about what feels good about that to you. Right? I think that for folks who are poly, it often requires more communication — more explicit communication. And I think maybe good time management skills, sometimes, you know. But being able to really check in about your own needs and somebody else's. So being clear about your needs and desires. And I think a lot of times partners that

care about each other can really get behind trying to meet the need of whatever that other person is. And over the course of time, you know, through discussing and exploration, you figure out whether or not that's a deal breaker. But I think, you know, having clear boundaries and limits — there's so many different ways to do poly, and I think when anybody comes out as something new, you think, "Am I poly enough? Am I doing it right?" So many different ways to do it.

Karen Yates

Oh, my gosh, yeah.

Diane Long

I mean, some people, to me, sort of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is not really poly — that's something else. But you know, I want to be a part of things. I want to know what's happening. I don't want to know what's happening. I want to know that you're doing well. I want it to be someone I know; I want it to be someone outside of my circle. You know, there's all different ways to do poly. And so you, really having space to figure that out — really importantly, I think, is not pretending to want something that you don't want.

Karen Yates

Right.

Diane Long

You know, I've been in open relationships, poly relationships, for more than 30 years, and figuring it out as I go. But I think now I know that it's really important for me to not be involved with someone who's either not poly or not open to being involved with somebody poly. I used to think that a polyamorous person had to defer to monogamy, until I met poly/mono couples, where people were just really clear about what they wanted and needed to feel secure and comfortable and connected. And people don't have to necessarily have the same relational style, as long as they're really consenting, and communicating, and figuring out what feels good.

Karen Yates

Yeah. I appreciated, Diane, what you said, that there are just so many types of poly. Like it's infinite, because it's just really based on the individuals in the relationship — or the individual as they're relating to another individual. And it might change over time. You know, for me, it has evolved. Like, I just realize I'm really clear now on what I want. And it is so different — in the beginning, when it was just scattershot, it was like, "Oh, okay, sign me up for any type of poly!" And then [laughing] "I'm game!" And then after,

I'm like, oh, I am not game for this. And I'm not game for that, and I'm not game for that. And it was — it's really great. Poly is a journey of self-exploration, basically, first and foremost. It's about — you know, I think, on the episode we did a little bit ago about what monogamous can learn from open relationships. And we talked about the existential angst that we all feel — all. Like, whether you're monogamous or nonmonogamous, the existential angst that we feel in our soul, and how sometimes we go to other people to fill that. And so we have to kind of understand: Where's all this coming from? Until we know things like that, we're not going to be able to really function well in a really open relationship that has the potential to push our buttons, right?

Diane Long

Can I add one more thing, Karen?

Karen Yates

Yeah!

Diane Long

I just want to say, you know, I think polyamory, or poly, doesn't always have to be sexual either. I think this idea that, you know, growing our capacity for love and connection, that we can get our needs met in a lot of different places. And I think when people really start talking about it and thinking about it, they can relate to "I have friends that I enjoy doing certain things with, and other friends that I do other things with," right? And we get physical and emotional needs met in different ways from different people. And that can also be true of sexuality.

Karen Yates

Absolutely. And there can also be... I can't remember I said this on the podcast, I think I did. You can go to a swingers party, or a sex party with your partner and not do anything. Just have the experience of being in a more free-flowing sexual environment. And that might be enough. Or that might be a nice beginning, to be like, "What is it like to explore something different, but having a nice container around it?"

More info on Tazima, Diane, and Mark is in the show notes.

Do you or a partner struggle with jealousy? You might want to check out the awesome "Jealousy Workbook" by Kathy Labriola. It gives you a ton of exercises to look at your green-eyed demons. While it's meant for open relationships, anyone with jealousy

issues will be helped. That book can be purchased through our Bookshop affiliate link in the show notes.

The work I do in biofield tuning, an energy modality that uses sound waves to help repattern your bioelectric field, can support you in getting out of stuck behaviors and become more aware of different choices. One person said "Karen is a wonder. You will be thoroughly amazed by what is possible." If you're interested in working with me remotely or in person, or learning more about my weekly group biofield tuning sessions on Zoom on a variety of topics, go to [karen-yates.com](http://karen-yates.com). That link is in the show notes.

Well, that is it, folks. Have a delightfully pleasurable week. 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](http://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](http://rebelliousmagazine.com).