
Automated transcription by Otter.ai

Hello and Happy Sunday, I hope that you're having a beautiful day. Today we're going to talk about solo polyamory. So I've talked in the past about solo polyamory here and there, but I've not really done a fresher, present-day video on it. So let's dive in – what it is, what it's not, the many ways it can look, as well as some potential challenges that might arise. Let's get into it.

Solo polyamory, a lot of people define it a bit differently. But broadly, it's the idea of a polyamorous person who is disinterested in building interdependent commitments, especially those that are typically associated with romantic and sexual relationships. So living together, child rearing together, mixing finances, like the typical destinations, quote, unquote, of the relationship escalator solo, polyamorous people are stepping off it in a more autonomous and independent way. So solo polyamory can look a lot of ways. I will go over some common characteristics that won't necessarily apply to every solo person you meet. Or if you are solo, it might not resonate with you. And that's cool.

But a common pattern that I notice, not only in my community, but see in digital spaces as well, is the lack of desire to cohabit with a partner. Where it gets tricky is, it's not always financially possible to live alone, right? And so if you are wanting to be solo, and you are living with roommates, for example, roommates who are close friends. maybe some of your friendships have sexual fluidity where you hook up sometimes, or you have some kinds of intimacy. does that then count as living with a partner? you see what I mean about these labels being kind of easy to challenge or not applicable in every situation? only the people inside of the relationship can decide how they want to describe it, or define it. But these are considerations that might be necessary, especially if the solo person is dating somebody under the expectation that there's no desire to live together, but then is having intimacy or hooking up with a friend who is a roommate. Then the optics of that could be confusing to the other partner who might feel rejected, like “you want that with them, but you don't with me”. So I usually try to get out ahead of a situation and be like, “Man, this kind of looks like a thing, even though I know it's not. maybe let me go proactively talk to anybody who might be confused or feel injured by it, and clarify so that I'm not misunderstood.”

And similarly, I've seen situations where a solo person requires financial aid or is capable of providing mutual aid in the community. And so if that solo person decides to subsidize the rent of their partner, for example, like “you're struggling, I'm not. here, I want to help you out for X amount of time”... technically, that is sharing bills.

patreon.com/chillpolyamory

Exclusive video: Nuance in solo polyamory

And what if they spend four days a week there? Now are they cohabitating part time? Where's the line? And I think it always comes back down to intentionality. if rent cost is prohibitive, and someone is able to provide either to their partner or someone else in the community, some mutual aid to help lift everybody up, I don't really see that as the same as if you have the intention of living together, escalating that dyad and sharing bills or sharing space for that reason.

This might be a good segway into how coparenting is not always binary. Many solo polyamorous people have the desire and intention to raise a kid in a one person household, either through adoption, artificial insemination, or a variety of ways. there is that intentional building of a one-parent home. but sometimes that wasn't the original plan. And now you're in a one-parent household, out of new desire, or shifting relationships or out of necessity. so it is not always that a solo person really had that intention, it could be that now they are deciding, "I don't really want to pursue additional co-parents." that could also be considered solo, even if other co-parents are still in the mix. Like if they're still parenting with their ex. And for necessity, they are interdependent around calendars of the kids, (e.g. they can't just go on vacation, they've got to strategize and schedule with their kids parent... or even financially, still having some intermixing for the benefit of the children, etc.) I think that one-parent household could absolutely still be solo. Because what do you want to build? What is your intention to build? And in a perfect utopia, would you have this interdependence? if you could snap your fingers and all of these systems and stressors could evaporate, what would you love to have for your life? I think that can also be a way that people like to determine, "is the label I'd like to use?"

As well, how are we defining co-parenting? I'm not a parent, so there's probably angles to this that I'm not like seeing. but I have helped co-parent in polycules – at least that's what we were calling it. Some people would find that a bit too generous of a term for me regularly spending time with the kids, regularly babysitting and providing some financial support in different situations. we chose to call that temporary co-parenting. But a lot of people would just say, "you're being in community" or "you're supporting a partner," and would feel too serious or crossing a line to take on that parent role or label. And that's fine. Again, every time I'm trying to parse "what are labels?" I find myself sort of coming up with ideas of how that label could be pushed or challenged or contradicted. And it's, yeah, I think Whenever someone's asking for a label, it needs to come paired with a lengthy clarification.

This sort of musing is intended to offer nuance. it is still valid to be solo polyamorous and share the load, share the responsibility of parenting. it is still valid to be solo, and desire people who are available to babysit a lot. that's cool, too. it just really requires a negotiation with the people involved, and what are their expectations. if they're

patreon.com/chillpolyamory

Exclusive video: Nuance in solo polyamory

feeling emotionally invested, if they're feeling maybe literally invested, like they're helping pay their kids through school or something, if their expectation then comes with "I need that co-parent role" or "I feel entitled to weigh in on decisions of what happens in parenting" – that really needs to be clarified. A solo person might need to reestablish the boundaries again and again, of "I want to make sure you're not seeing this as an escalation. I want to make sure your expectations are not changing of what you and I are doing together, or of what power and authority you might have in this parenting situation. I'm grateful for your support, and I still see myself as the only parent in this situation."

So yeah, that could be a good transition into discussing power in a solo polyamorous situation. How does hierarchy, or the intention for non hierarchy, function when somebody wants that degree of independence?

First and foremost, do not assume that a solo polyamorous person is automatically comfortable being a secondary in a hierarchy. I'll say it again: solo people are not inherently comfortable being secondaries in hierarchies. This is a common misconception and it comes from these monogamous norms of "a valid relationship is one that is escalating". That if someone does not desire escalation, therefore they do not desire equality. I'd say the majority of the time, hierarchies in polyamorous spaces are pretty bad at getting informed consent from secondaries. Like they might say, "You're a secondary, I have a primary" but not describe what that means. And not say, "Hey, this is the power my partner has over our relationship, over the pace at which it grows, over whether or not we even keep dating. this is what you do and don't get to decide about our relationship, that somebody else you're not dating can influence and have power over. Are you cool with that?" that is a more honest pursuit of informed consent.

Even people who might be pretty diligent about informed consent in other areas might have misunderstandings about solo polyamory, and assume because you don't want escalation in this way, therefore, you don't mind having less power. therefore you don't mind someone having power over you. But that is not something to be assumed. And if you're a solo person agreeing to be a secondary, really interrogate what that looks like in practice, to see if actually you will feel respected, if you will feel comfortable in that kind of power dynamic.

But what about hierarchies of one? a lot of solo polyamorous people will say "I am my own primary" right? And that can be shorthand to say "any major decisions, any ultimate moves in my life, I am the only one that gets to say how that happens or if that happens." so it's not just about "I don't want to physically get interdependent" it's also "I don't want there to be somebody who has equal amounts of power and

patreon.com/chillpolyamory

Exclusive video: Nuance in solo polyamory

decision-making as me, in things that will affect me.” And that's why a lot of times, even people who say they are their own primary, are still uncomfortable being a secondary because somebody else will be weighing in on things that impact them. (in a powerful way – not in a “please consider my needs” way but in a “this is happening” way, you know what I mean?)

But yeah, to be your own primary could look like, if there is a job offer on the other side of the country, and you're considering moving, you might talk to your partners, you might see “How can I take care of you in this?” but the decision to do it is yours and yours alone. So that could just be an example of how that functions, or why somebody would use that label of “I am my own primary.”

OK. What are common struggles? We've already touched on a few, like the assumption of secondary status being fine without negotiation. But more than just power dynamics, there can be an assumption that not being a priority is fine, an automatic default deprioritization. Someone could have anti hierarchical power structures, but still in practice be stingier with a solo person. or even assume that a solo person is incapable of being hurt or neglected, because, well, “they don't need anything”, right? I think that kind of stems from this culture of hyper individualism. That if somebody is doing things their own way, then therefore they are comfortable being alone. But to be solo polyamorous doesn't mean they're an island. we're all in community. they date people, love people, have regular time commitments with people, there is some consistency that might be desired, even if interdependence is not desired. So I think it can just be important that if we notice this switch flip – of, “oh, you're in this box now. So therefore, I'm gonna make this person automatically more important to me, or prioritized over you,” that just needs to be investigated. “Does this actually feel organic to the relationship? Or is this me imposing a certain worldview or a value system onto it, based off of the label you've chosen? And do we even want that and could that even hurt one or more people involved?”

In that same vein, solo polyamory sometimes can be chosen for a desire for hyper-independence. Sometimes that is an issue in solo polyamory. Sometimes people choose that path, because they want to not need anybody, because they don't trust anybody or because they don't want to get hurt again. or they fear codependence. And I relate to all of that! I moved to New York on my own, three days after I graduated college. And I was like, “I don't need anybody, I'm gonna do this myself.” And it was this militant refusal to be in community, basically. Out of fear, out of trauma, out of cultural conditioning that kind of encourages it. I was a very good worker bee because I wasn't in community, and that feeds capitalism – it's a whole network of interlocking systems that can underpin our individual choices as well. But that aside, I relate to and don't intend to shame you, if that resonates with you. I get

patreon.com/chillpolyamory

Exclusive video: Nuance in solo polyamory

it. And I just think a middle ground is good to find. Because we are social creatures, and we can have independence, we can avoid codependence without avoiding people. without rejecting anyone from getting close. Solo does not mean “no one get close to me.”

So yeah, if it resonates with you and stings a little bit, that's just good information, just notice it. you don't have to do anything you don't want to do. If that's what feels like it's protecting you right now, Okay. Just keep inquiring, “Why am I choosing this? And is it something I'm running towards or something I'm running away from? what motive would I prefer guide my decision making?” and I ultimately was like, “Yeah, I want to choose something out of an abundant enthusiasm, rather than a fear and a shutting down response”. But that's not everybody's experience.

Other issues that can present themselves in solo polyamory is – solo people can often be a target of unicorn hunting. or dragon hunting, I think is what some people prefer to be called if “unicorn” feels too femme. But dyads can often objectify a solo person and say, “great, we found our sexual fantasy. this person doesn't have any needs”. And that can just be really tricky. I really encourage solo people, if you do play with couples, or if you do date people who are in hierarchies, to really self advocate for how you would like to be treated. because even really well-meaning people can overlook your needs. They need to see the entirety of your humanity, not just what could serve them.

There can also be low key, a bait and switch of expectations. Sometimes people will date a solo person and think, “Okay, well, this is a phase. they're solo for now. But we're falling in love. So of course, they're going to change, they're going to want to do these things with me.” That can be really rough for everybody involved. Continue to check in, “Hey, we're doing different things now, or we feel differently about each other. have our expectations changed? are we wanting different things?” that can be some preventative medicine to a dynamic. Because, yeah, it can be really heartbreaking to mistakenly think that the optics of expressing love or spending a lot of time together mean “now they don't want solo anymore.” that's not the same thing. So continue to check in. And if you're a person who's dating a solo person, and you're wanting more with them, think “Okay, well, what would I need to do with you, and maybe remove from our interactions, so that I am not feeling so tender about what we're not doing together?” There can be grief in that, and that's fair. it goes the path of restructuring in a way that you could continue to interact without anybody feeling hurt or feeling resentful.

There can also be this assumption that a solo person is a vacation partner.

“Whenever I want to have fun, I'm gonna go hang out with a solo person. they're my

patreon.com/chillpolyamory

Exclusive video: Nuance in solo polyamory

escape partner, my vacation partner, my manic pixie dream partner, right?" That is a subtler, more insidious form of objectification that can happen, a dehumanization that can happen. People thinking, "we're just supposed to have a good time. We're not building anything together that I would value as an important relationship. And so therefore, I don't want to emotionally support you. I don't want you to be texting me if you're having a bad day. we're just having fun." That can be really shitty, right? Especially if the inverse is not true. And the solo person is fine offering emotional support, but then realizes their partner is unwilling to reciprocate because they've been put in the "not serious" relationship box. it's all really shitty to discover that the hard way, it can be really disheartening. And so yeah, just, I think every point in this bullet point list that I've made is coming back down to – define what these words mean, and what the expectations are. So not to be too glib about it, to say "just talk about it." But yeah, talk about it. Don't don't assume anything. there can be so much fluidity with what these labels mean, in practice.

On the note of fluidity – sometimes there is fluidity with the desire for solo polyamory. Sometimes people desire that until they realize they're starting to evolve. Sometimes people are currently interdependent with others, but are discovering they want more of a solo path. In both cases, it requires a conscious adding of or conscious removing of those kinds of activities and commitments together, talking about it the whole time. Sometimes people can be met with hostility if they're solo, and notice they want something different, right? They can be accused of lying about having been solo, or mismanaging expectations. while it might be no longer possible to continue a relationship, if that evolution of structure is not possible for your current partner (for some people that might be a deal breaker and that can be really heartbreaking) but just because you're noticing as a solo person, that you're wanting to maybe move away from the solo structure, that doesn't mean you were lying. That doesn't mean it wasn't true for you. It's just you're discovering that you're changing, because humans are always evolving and changing. and we just notice what we want, and then say, "okay, apparently I want this now." we aren't choosing what we desire, we can just sort of acknowledge it, and then choose if we pursue it or not.

So. It's always tricky for me to speak to dynamics in which I'm not participating. But I don't want the limits of my personal experience to limit what kinds of topics and resources I can make available for you. So I say it just with the caveat of this being told through the amalgamation of stories from people who are living in this way, anecdotes and experiences and things I've witnessed, people I love who are solo/ Through that sort of game of telephone, I'm trying to consolidate the wisdom of my community.

patreon.com/chillpolyamory

Exclusive video: Nuance in solo polyamory

So if anything I've said sort of falls flat, doesn't ring true, or if there's an angle to this that I'm not really considering – If you're solo, I would love to hear your input. these resources can be dialogues, they can be evolutions. I'm always open to changing my mind or expanding and adding nuance to a conversation. Anyway, that's what comes to mind. I hope that you're having a beautiful day, that you have a beautiful start to your week, and I will see you next Sunday. Bye.

xxx