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*Automated transcription by Otter.ai*

Hello and Happy Sunday, I hope that you're having a beautiful day and a beautiful weekend. Today is part two in my series on small steps towards big changes. People will say "how did you go from monogamy towards non monogamy? How did you go from hierarchy (from a place of fear) towards relationship anarchy (from a place of security)?"

From a place of self reflection, literally "what has worked?" As always, I'm not a mental health professional. So this is not coming from an academic point of view. And none of it is diagnostic nor prescriptive. This is a framework born out of lived experience. And then you can do with that what you will.

So in part one, it was all about unpacking what we want. Part two, I really want to get into our motivations of *why* we want what we want. And understand the complexity, there may be some intersecting or even conflicting desires, our motivations there. And just be certain that we have clarity on that, before we start strategizing how to get where we're trying to go.

As a through line, I will continue to reference the five examples that I established in part one. That is: 1) cohabitating peacefully with a partner, 2) letting go of control of a partner, 3) relaxing and having a nice time at sex parties, 4) to get comfortable meeting metamours in pursuit of kitchen table polyamory, and 5) to unpack and challenge – maybe even restructure – the power dynamics of a long term relationship, in pursuit of relationship anarchy. please don't use those five things as comprehensive case studies, because I'm really just using them to illustrate how I could see this framework working in practice. If you're anything like me, you like examples, so maybe that's helpful, maybe it's not, but I will be using them to illustrate the framework rather than presenting them as deep dives on those topics.

When considering why we want what we want, maybe there's already an answer locked and loaded. "I want it because I need it" or "I want it because it's who I am", those are valid. And the reason that it's the first that comes to mind is probably because it is a, if not the, driving force. I do think there's value in continuing to ask more questions about what we want, at least if nothing else, just to rule out that things we don't want in the driver's seat are not in the driver's seat, right? or to better understand ourselves, our partners, our community's motives for asking, reaching for something, working towards something, individually or together.

The first one I usually check in on is survival. "What are my immediate baseline of Maslow's hierarchy of needs? like my physiological needs for food, water, shelter?"

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Survival might be simple enough, the main reason we're doing something. And that could look like, in the example of wanting to cohabitate peacefully with a partner, that could look like "I can't afford rent alone". It's okay to jump into something without thinking. "I need shelter, so I'm going to go ahead and cohabitate with this partner, and figure out all the other shit later, because I need to be safe."

Forethought is a luxury for a lot of people. And so it's perfectly fine if all of this framework is being explored after the thing is already done. So yeah, basic needs survival, often the first thing I think of.

Then can we go a little bit slower, if possible, towards understanding, what are the internal and what are the external drives happening here? So with example one, of living with a partner, in addition to survival, what internal motivations? is it a desire for intimacy? Am I wanting more roots and tradition? Am I wanting to move towards bigger goals eventually, have expansive family, whether that looks like –

*[dog opens the door, Morgan gets up to close it]*

Once he learned how to open doors, it was all over.

So, do I feel a sense of safety and enthusiasm and a desire to nest and be domestic? does that feel fulfilling and exciting? Is there any sort of anxiety driving this? that if I don't become the partner that they live with, then maybe I'm not as important? just to ask about that, to ask "are there any social scripts like the relationship escalator? that I'm relying on external situations to reaffirm something internally?"

Are there external stressors that are sort of threatening our sense of acceptance in spaces or a sense of self esteem? social stressors, familial peer relationship stressors that are kind of pushing us along? And that happens a lot in romantic relationships where people expect the escalator, the one escalator that they've seen as a model. And while it's perfectly fine to want anything along that escalator, it becomes more of a problem when people expect it or even shame you when you don't, or consider your relationship a failure if you're not. Like, "Oh, you two have been together for 10 years, and you've never moved in? you must not be doing well". I've heard stuff like that before.

But it's not just that external pressure has to be bad, right? Maybe external praise or external validation could feel nice. In cohabitation, that could look like, feeling like you're joining in a commune. Right? So what if a partner lives with a couple of their other partners, and they're inviting you in and there's that desire for more intimacy and for more community. And also that validation, that you're included, and that you're welcome, things like that. So those are just some examples of the types of things that might be happening inside and outside, for example one.

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So for example two, of wanting to move away from controlling impulses or behaviors, especially toward people you care about. Some internal motivations might be “I hate how I feel when I do it. Everything in me wants to ask you to stop dating that person, because I'm insecure about them. But I also would hate myself, if I asked you to do that”, right? Those things can coexist. And so some internal motivations for pursuit of letting go of control could be our own self image, our own idea of the best version of ourselves and wanting to strive toward that.

There could also be some relief, like seeking relief from our perceived responsibility to keep everything in order, from our perceived ability to be that powerful. While it is humbling, while it requires some ego death, unfortunately, it also can be a big sigh of relief when I'm in a place of acceptance that “I couldn't control that even if I tried.”

An example of some external motivators for doing that is, your partner's mad at you. Your partner has expressed resentment, and that is now creating a sense of insecurity in the relationship. There's conflict or strife, there is consistent dissatisfaction. The dynamic we've been trying to control in order to feel security, ironically, the control itself could be threatening our security. And if external feedback is that we are pushing people away by trying to control them, then that could be a major motivator. Other people we love reflecting back to us somebody that they are not wanting to stay close with, or somebody that they don't feel safe with. It could be that that is a main reason that we go down this road.

And as a side note, on the topic of control, I think a caveat is if addiction is in the mix. I won't speak too at length about that, because that's above my paygrade. But as someone who's been in a process addiction myself, loves some addicts who are sober, has loved some addicts who have relapsed, I am close with some addicts who have never sought help. And so from that experience, I can say that, there is a difference between an internal motivator that we are conscious of and maybe have a little bit of impulse control around, versus an addiction, which is completely dominating us. If we're trying to control things, or we're so in search of a high or we're so terrified of withdrawal, I think that's when an internal motivator then becomes more like survival. And so I really do think that that's a separate situation.

Let's talk about example three, which is a desire to feel relaxed at sex parties. to feel sex positive. Internally, do we sexually hunger for this? Like, is it a fantasy? Is it a desire? Are we wanting intimacy with a partner or partners? are we wanting fun and exploration and adventure for ourselves and in connection with other people? because sometimes it's really not that deep. Sometimes we just want something if it is fun, sometimes we just want to enjoy trying something new. And if we realize, “oh, this is hard”, or “I have some blocks here”, that's just good to know.

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Sometimes the motives internally might feel contradictory, like maybe we feel sex positive, and also we are shaming ourselves for not being “kinky enough” or “queer enough”, right? A lot of us have experienced purity culture shaming, anti-queerness growing up, and so had to suppress part or all of our sexuality until it was safer in adulthood, Let's not turn into shaming ourselves for not wanting a thing, and not pushing past our discomfort, for hopes of like, being a different person than we are. It is totally fine if it seems like some of these motives are warring factions with each other. Let's just name all of it. Let's see how strong or faint either motivation, all the motivations, are.

For external motivations, it could be that a lot of our friends are really kinky and into sex party spaces. And so we're wanting to feel included and validated, we're wanting social status, social acceptance, it could be that sometimes, unfortunately, people feel external pressure and external shaming like, “if you were really sex positive...” It's like what I said with how we can shame ourselves. Sometimes other people unfortunately do that. Like, “if you were really sex positive, or if you were really polyamorous, you would be okay with this, you would be comfortable”. And that is manipulative, and coercive. I just want to call that out. It happens way more than you might think.

This is also what can come out of unpacking our motivations. If it's, “oh, I really want to go to the sex party, because they'll be mad if I don't”, let's ask more questions. Why would they be mad? What does that mean? What am I afraid I might lose? Am I doing this out of fear out of some kind of pressure and coercion from the outside? That's important to notice. And it's important to name.

Let's get into example four, which is in pursuit of kitchen table polyamory, we want to be more comfortable meeting our metamours. The move towards kitchen table could have, like, practical logistical necessity. “I'm going to run into this person, I need to be able to at least be civil to at least be able to say hi, to see their face without being activated. I need to be able to interact with this person.” Just a sort of dispassionate, even disinterested desire to still be comfortable with a person. Like “I don't want to know them. I don't want to be friends with them. But I don't want to have to create all of these elaborate ways to avoid them either. And logistically, it would make my life easier if I was more comfortable”. I think that's a perfectly valid reason to want to work on this.

Maybe we internally have enthusiasm, excitement to meet metamours. maybe it's even arousing at the idea of spending time. Some people have some sexual interest in connecting with metamours or extended polycule. But sometimes it's just curiosity. Oh, “I wonder, I wonder who this person is”. Is it more about “I want to meet this person specifically”? is it about “I want to be a person who's comfortable to

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meet metamours?" Like, is it about self actualization and self image that "I don't want to be the kind of person that would be anxious in this case"? Or is it that "this person is clearly important to somebody I love. So I'd love to not exclude them from our space, exclude them from our extended life"...

Sometimes internal motivations can come from a bit more of a fearful or anxious place, like, "I'm looking for confirmation of if they're better looking, or if they're cooler than me, I'm looking to get ahold of the situation and really make sure that I assert my authority. That I throw my weight around, and that they know how important I am". I don't want to say we're going at it for the wrong reasons, I think we just need to understand if we are hoping to give to this person, or if we're hoping that this interaction will give to us. Are we hoping to come as a peer, with camaraderie, or are we hoping to dominate?

Or, are we in a fawn response? Like "I really want them to like me"? Is there pressure from the hinge partner, saying "you need to meet my other partner"? I just want to be mindful of external pressures that feel manufactured, that feel forced, that feel pressuring. I don't think actions that are born out of that motivation, I don't think they lead to contentment with what we're doing. I don't think they lead to us being glad we're doing a thing, necessarily. Check, "where is the pressure or stress coming from?" they are not mutually exclusive, it could be that a partner really is anxious for us to meet their partner. And that's annoying. But in general, we would like to meet them or we would like to not feel inhibited. And so the dominating motivation is "I want to grow, I want to work on this for myself, I would be interested to meet them. And I'm getting this pressure from my partner, but I would say it's like a 90% / 10%." Can we just name all of it and get a sense of proportionality of what is leading the charge?

For example five, of wanting to unpack and challenge power dynamics in a long term relationship, in pursuit of relationship anarchy. When we're considering our internal motivations, theory and ideology might be a big reason for it. The idea of self actualization is wrapped up all in that, right? the idea of, "I want to be the kind of person who... [insert blank]". So in this case, "I want to be the kind of person who does not treat anybody like they matter more than anybody else, who does not enforce my will on other people, or does not create relationship structures where a person does not have a say in something that affects them".

And it could be that by stepping into a more shoulder-to-shoulder egalitarian type of relating to people, more egalitarian type of decision making, it could be that we feel really good about ourselves. It could be that we feel really close to people. That can sometimes be the downside of being in a position of higher authority, whether that's in love, or at work, or in government or something. If we have authority over people,

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then in a way, they stopped being our peers in that moment. And so it takes away a level of intimacy or camaraderie, it takes away an ability to connect with that person. And so when I have stepped out of – in romantic situations – when I've stepped out of a primary position, or every single time that I confront couples privilege, and I'm like, "absolutely let's proactively include this person", or "we did it again, oops, let's proactively do this". – It is maintenance, it is dailiness. – Every time I do that, I do feel good about myself. I do feel closer to people, and I receive warmth, too. So that also goes to the external motivations of positive reinforcement, of people feeling loving towards you, or feeling respected. And so then they respect you. A desire to have this mutually beneficial situation could be an external motivator.

Sometimes people will say, "Well, I'm scared of losing that partner. So I will go ahead and restructure, I will go ahead and pursue this other structure". On the one hand, Sure, our partners, we evolve with them. but I think if there is a suppression of the self, a suppression of thoughts, and masking and faking it in order to try to appease a person, in order to hang on to a dynamic, I just encourage asking, "what kind of dynamic are we going to have, then? Are we creating a foundation where our dynamic depends on me masking?" Because if that's the case, then is that really what you want to build?

Again, it can get tricky, right? Like when it comes to survival, security, if we are financially intertwined with somebody and we can not live on our own. And that person is saying, "Well, I want this kind of relationship structure now". And we're like, "okay, I guess I have to go along with it. Because then what? Otherwise I have to move out? I can't financially support myself..." I think, let's name if there is an uncomfortable asymmetry of power at play. That's kind of the point of unpacking power dynamics. It's not just "in a long term relationship, how does this dyad affect other people? How does this couple's privilege or priority and longevity, how does that ripple out?" It's also a question of, internally in the dyad, "Is there a power asymmetry of any kind that could create – even unintentionally – a kind of coercion?" That not only might this relationship end if we don't evolve in this direction, but you might not have, you know, the same social life, you might not have a sense of security or a home or money? Can we really tease out and name all of the risks and all of the perceived threats? because then we can really get clarity on what it is that is motivating us. Not an easy or simple thing to answer. But I do think it is a vital one.

So there are a few things that I caution people about when considering their motives here. Is anybody looking for a quick fix? Can we not be looking for something to instantly make it go away, instantly make it feel better? because often, whatever we pick might take off the pressure for a day or two, might take off the pressure for a week or two. Or it might completely bulldoze over what is there, trying to bypass having to deal with it.

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In the case of meeting metamours, sometimes people are like, "Well, I'm uncomfortable meeting metas. So let me just jump in and we'll all go out to dinner together". Woahhh. is that really the fix that it seems like is? is that potentially opening the door to other stressors? Could it delay the reaction, so then we digest it in a month and have complete overwhelm because we moved at a pace that wasn't comfortable? Or maybe even the quick fix itself was something we didn't actually want to do. So can we just ask that question: are we trying to just make this go away urgently? And if yes, is there a slower pace or a more thoughtful way that we can go about making it resolved long term?

In addition to quick fixes, I caution against all-or-nothing thinking. So for that example of just hurrying up and meeting somebody to try and override the discomfort. Does it need to be all or nothing? Does it need to be that either there's no meeting of them, no talking to them, or, we are full-on kitchen table, having dinner and game nights and stuff together? Is there a gradient in between? Because the answer is usually yes. Do we have an all or nothing mentality that "I have to do this, otherwise, I won't have safety"? Like "I have to jump in, otherwise, I won't have a relationship. And so my external pressure is that my partner will leave me if I don't do this most extreme version of what they want". Can we notice if binary, black and white, all or nothing thinking is in play? Because often that is a false framing of the situation. Is there more nuance here that I can consider?

Another thing I caution people to include in the mix, is the current mental health status of everybody. Like, I personally attempted evolving into more of an egalitarian relationship structure, while my dad was dying, and I was not on bipolar medication. And that just played a big role in my reactivity. It played a big role like, I would have a big idea during a manic episode, I'd have a big idea. "Let's do this. Let's act on this", and I thought I was thinking clearly. And I really appreciated when people would gently question like, "Hey, this is really different from what you said last week. how are you doing? could it be that – in addition to this being what you want – that maybe your mental health is also changing your intensity about it? or your urgency about it, your emotions about it?" And so, again, it's a very personal decision of how and when, and who confronts that. But I think it just needs to be said that that is a very important factor when we are approaching our motivations, you know?

And to that end, I think, I also want to caution people against a one-size-fits-all attitude. like, "well, these people can do it. So therefore, I should be able to", or "this worked for that couple. So it should work for us". I very much support talking to other people who have what we want, and asking them how they got it. That's the whole point of this Patreon. like, "Hey, if you relate to me, I can talk about what I do and how I got here". that is the whole point of this series. And, it is also why I consistently give the caveat of "take what resonates and leave what doesn't" because I do not believe

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that there is a one size fits all solution for anybody. Rather than us looking to other people to give us a blueprint, can we look for tools to empower us to create our own?

So this is all an exercise to reveal, like I said, why we want what we want. Hopefully it will provide clarity to decide if you even still want to do what you were originally setting out to do. It's why I do this *before* I get into planning, because I want to really make sure I'm doing this for reasons that I like. and that I don't have trauma driving the bus, or another partner pushing me into something. If I really respect and stand by my motives for something, okay, great. But yeah, maybe this exercise, in and of itself, you have already made your decision that you don't want to do something.

But also, this exercise can reveal things like, if we are scared of something, or if we really desire something, then that can play into the baby-steps of it. We can be sensitive to fears or insecurities, we can be mindful of, or even prioritizing, things that excite us or seem fun. And that can make your unique baby-step plan feel a lot more fulfilling and a lot more satisfying. Because it's directly addressing what you named are your motivations, what you named are the reasons why you want to do these things.

So I would love to know your thoughts. I'd love to know if there's anything that I missed, any angles to this that I overlooked. And yeah, just, potential topics for future resources or potential things to keep in mind as I continue this series specifically. So I'd love to know all that you think and feel. You can put it in the comments, you can DM me on Patreon. I'm so glad you're here. Thank you for your support. And I hope you have a great week. Talk to you later. Bye

xxx