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Hello, and Happy Sunday, I hope that you're having a lovely weekend, I am coming back from being sick, experiencing something that I'm not ready to talk about. I'm gonna let it marinate while I deal with it, but like a personal interpersonal issue. as well as having some physiological chronic pains. So all that to say, if I don't seem exuberant, if I seem like my energy is a little bit lower, that would be the reason.

So a very common request that I get is about metamour relationships. especially if you are experiencing that the hinge partner - a shared partner with somebody - is being somewhat passive, or there's triangulation, or there's some role that is being played or being avoided. Let's talk about best practices for hinge partnerships in a general sense, right? Whenever there is an intersectionality of relating, like, if your hinge is also your roommate is also your co parent, there's going to be additional asterisks and caveats to what we expect of that person. But today, I'd like to talk about when conflict between metamours has a lot to do with whether or not the hinge is available, whether or not the hinge is meeting their needs. What, as a hinge, can I avoid? What traps can I avoid? In order to not be the creator of conflict between metamours? Let's talk about it.

So I'd say one of the biggest points of tension or potential conflicts between metamours in a relationship can stem from a lack of clarity, or a lack of agreement on what the structure even is. blurriness on structure can create conflict between metas, not just between people who are in direct romantic or sexual relation with each other. If you were to say, non hierarchy aligns with my values, so therefore, I'm practicing non hierarchy, it doesn't really work like that, right? Like, how are we making sure that words match actions because we can tell a newer relationship, this is my value system. So this is what you can expect. There is complexity to constructing something that is anti hierarchical by intention, and I do have more resources in the works about that specifically. but if we set the expectation that a younger relationship or a less interdependent relationship, can expect equitable treatment as longer term or more intertwined dynamics, and then that's not how it happens in practice, that can pit metas against each other. Or, inversely, if one partner is expecting some form of status or authority, and then is not receiving it. It too often can create this discord between people in the hinge partners life.

How can the hinge partner be clearer? How can there be intentionality of words, matching actions? What is the actual nuanced way that this will look? Because we really need clarity on literally what can people expect? Like if I'm having a bad night and another meta is having a bad night at the same time - Like how does that get

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handled? How does that get negotiated? You know, it doesn't have to mean unilaterally this person will always get attention or will always get care first. It can mean when there are conflicting needs. If I want to be anti hierarchical about this, here is how I would open up the discussion. here are the things that I would factor into consideration, urgency, stakes, what is being asked of me? what is possible for me to offer that sort of thing?

So sort of crafting hypotheticals with our partnerships - if we're the hinge partner, saying hypothetically, if you were to be feeling really destabilized and you really want reassurance and I'm currently on a date, here's how I might handle that. I might not be looking at my phone. and please do not have the expectation that I will even be available or even be able to register and read that you have a need. Right? like this is what is reasonable or what even the structure looks like in practice. This, this is how that kind of gets flushed out. And we make sure that what's in our head about what we said, this is what non hierarchy would mean to me. That might not necessarily be what is in the head of our partner.

So I like to have these more example-rich, hypothetical conversations when discussing structure, because it really does matter what you would expect. especially when something feels high stakes, especially when what you need appears to be at odds with what a metamour needs. How would that go? These conversations are so much easier to have when it's hypothetical, when it's not currently happening in front of you. And you're just sort of imagining a scenario. without saying, "partner, I anticipate you're going to do this," we can just say the idea. and maybe referencing previous relationships that didn't go so great. We can say, "oh, you know, this happened in the past. I wonder, what do you think about how that played out? here's what I would hope to have happen differently in future partnerships. What do you think about that?" It doesn't always have to be a made up scenario, it could be what we don't want to experience again. if the expectation is this partner will not recreate that experience for us. Yeah, let's talk about it.

And unfortunately, it can be all too easy to get upset at the other partnerships. "If they didn't have that need, Or if they didn't even exist, then I would have my need met." But we really need to remember that we are in a direct relationship with our shared partner. And that is the relationship we have the ability to negotiate. And our partner is not passive in this, even if they appear to do nothing, that is an action, right? the person who has a relationship with each metamour - that is the only person really able to negotiate both relationships, or really able to say, you know, what are your needs? And how can I meet them? All right, so what is a mutually beneficial solution that still factors in my own needs? that is work that a hinge takes on, because you have decided to commit to 2 people.

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And to the best of our ability, to avoid placing blame of our unmet needs in our relationship on someone who's not in our relationship. because the person that we're dating has the choice to meet our needs or not, or to be poly saturated or overwhelmed, like they are agreeing to a certain dynamic. our beef is with them for not upholding their agreement. You know what I mean?

On the topic of passivity, you know, as a hinge, if one of my partners is being rude to another one of my partners, yes, I don't want to step into the middle of their conflict. But I'm also not going to cosign it by being passive. A boundary being - this is what I will and will not participate in. I include in that, I will not participate in bad mouthing my other partner, I will not participate in passively and silently listening to you badmouth my other partner, I feel uncomfortable with you speaking about them like that, or speaking to them like that, that makes me uncomfortable. I own that experience. Because in that way, I am pushing back on what I find to be unacceptable. but I'm not defending one at the expense of another. I'm saying like, that makes me uncomfortable. Please don't talk to me about that. or if you're wanting me to pick sides, I don't really feel in a position to do tha. or I don't have a desire to do that. I would like to let both of you resolve your conflict directly.

They're allowed to not get along, we don't have to force kitchen table. and also, I'm gonna have a reaction, I'm gonna have feelings about that. Like, I'm really bummed at the very least that, you are not getting along, because I enjoyed kitchen table. And also, you're welcome to feel how you feel. And that is not my business really. And that is not something that I want to get involved in. But I am having a response. I think that that can be a more honest way to own our experience, own our role without overstepping.

On the flip side. If, for example, a conflict between two of your partners is disrupting the ability for everybody to hang out with each other, is disrupting the ability to have an easy relaxed kitchen table polyamory, we can be tempted to swing really far in the other direction. To encourage them to make up with each other. we can meddle, even if it doesn't seem like the most extreme version of meddling. It can be tempting to say "come on, why don't you just make up with them?" or "what they did - Isn't there a solution here?" And that can be frustrating and disheartening, I've been on both sides of that. I empathize with that impulse. And I think it is important to own what our motives are, we are not unbiased third parties in this. so that can even make things worse. that can be perceived as invalidating the feelings of the person in front of us. that could be seen as ignoring some very real blocks to conflict resolution that maybe, the person in front of us doesn't have 100% of the power to overcome. and if we're not saying our motivations, then it doesn't feel right.

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I've been in that position before, where I just really wanted everybody to get along. And I would defend each person to the other, right? And say, "they're also really good person, and why don't you just make up with them?" or "I think you would really like them. I know you had a rough first start, but come on." because of my own desire for a certain structure, my own desire for kitchen table. some people get in this position, if they're trying really hard to have a triad or a threesome for a night, or, you know, if there is an agenda on our end. if we want a certain outcome, because we want a certain experience or a certain kind of dynamic. that winds up not feeling caring.

so it's one thing to say, "I really think you should get along", it's another to say, "I'm really frustrated, I'm really disappointed. I had this picture in my head that it was going to play out like this. And I'm really upset." the former is trying to control a situation. The latter is voicing dissatisfaction and frustration at our very real inability to control the situation. We can't control the situation either way, right? So are we going to make it worse by trying to control it? Or are we going to voice how we're feeling? and that we're going through our own grief of processing it. Sometimes triads that wind up breaking up, and becoming V relationships, that hinge partner has their own grief to process the imagined happy throuple future.

We are allowed to have our own reactions as hinge partners to metamour conflict. And let's be mindful of acting as if we are impartial, or acting as if we are doing good by trying to encourage resolution. because there is zero, I'm pretty sure there's zero possibility of us being unbiased in that situation. And when our motives are corrupted in that way, especially if we're not acknowledging it, it can come off as disingenuous or having bad intentions. or it can create new conflicts. our partner can now get frustrated with us for trying to force it, you know, and, and that is all very preventable. So whenever possible, I try to avoid taking the long way and creating new disruptions and conflicts along the way, if that makes sense.

Okay, so we've talked about ensuring that there's clarity with everybody that we're dating, that everyone's on the same page. we've talked about avoiding passivity, and also avoiding meddling. what feels like a natural next topic is - conflict avoidance on the part of the hinge.

So up until this point of discussing passivity versus meddling, I've sort of been framing that as if the hinge didn't play a role in the conflict itself. I've been framing that as, this person loves two people and those two people wound up meeting, and just didn't like each other. or it's not a good match. And they had their own tiff about something that is unrelated to the hinge. that has been up until this point,

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essentially what I've been discussing, because I feel like that's a helpful, less complicated entry point. But let's get more complicated, shall we?

The hinge partner has a lot of landmines to potentially pit partners against each other or potentially set up conflict between two people. passivity of the hinge can look like, in that context, being avoidant of conflict between one or both of your partners and yourself, right? like if I as a hinge, I really don't want my partner to be mad at me because I need to reschedule something. it could be tempting to say, I can't do that, I'm not able to do that, because my other partner really needs this. framing it as we don't have a choice.

It can be hard to deliver disappointing information. And I think it might sort of be a vestige of like mononormative dating culture, to blame people outside of a dyad for what you're not able to provide that person. but that is prime real estate for one partner to hate the other, for one partner to say, "oh, my metamour is the reason I'm not getting what I want or need. That meta, as far as I know, is being pressuring or demanding or unreasonable." That is how it's been framed in order to let our hinge partner off the hook of being the bad guy, right? Or, "my Meta, if they didn't have that need, or if they didn't even exist in the polycule, that would make my life easier." it is very easy to fall into that trap. And that happens all the time.

So what I consider to be a Best Practices as a hinge partner, is to be sure my language is precise. that I have agency and I have choice in what I'm doing. And if a decision I've made, or a decision I'm currently leaning towards making, is going to be unpopular, it's going to be hard for me. to tell a partner of mine that I'm not going to be doing something that you would prefer I do, that is hard. But if I try to avoid that conflict, by taking blame off of me as if I don't have an option - in the short term might feel a little less difficult. But in the long term it is really just, oh my god, you're setting yourself up for so much more conflict, headache, and heartache.

We don't have to be rude. We don't have to necessarily create a sense of scarcity, as if there's a binary "one person gets their needs met. And automatically the other person doesn't." Sometimes it happens - resources, time, energy are finite, you know, but often there can be some discussion. Like, "I am really sorry that I can't do this thing. And also, what about that alternative?" we can even come equipped with a suggestion of another way that that person can still have their needs met. even though this is disappointing, I would also like to offer this instead. And that can be mitigating any huge fallout.

So we as a hinge have the ability to approach a conflict or open up that conversation as thoughtfully as we can. We can't control how we're received. the partner being

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told no, could still jump to the conclusion that the metamour is the problem. could still have a very big reaction. And that is disappointing. And also, if we've done our best to be sure that we're trying to uphold agreements with both people we've committed to, that's all we can do. The fear of upsetting one person at the expense of another can create that impulse to be avoidant of not even dealing with it, or to blame the other partner. I really discourage that.

So another topic that I think is really important to be mindful of as a hinge, is minimization and withholding or omission. Both of those things can really create conflict in the polycule, create conflict between metamours. so what does that mean?

So minimization, it can look like - I'm falling in love with somebody, I am noticing I want some sort of higher frequency of seeing them, or more intensity. I'm wanting more and they are also wanting more. And I have an insecure other partner who feels really scared of that reality. and has even voiced "that's my biggest fear". You know, that's pretty common. and I think everybody is valid, it's valid to be scared, to worry about your own stability and security. Will you still have your needs met? It's valid to notice romantic love or sexual enthusiasm . It's valid to feel those things. What matters next is, is everything being clearly communicated? is everyone's expectation being managed?

Because, and I've fallen into this trap, too, especially in the beginning, if my fearful partner would have a big reaction to learning that I want to see the other person more... If they would be upset or activated by that, it can be really tempting to say, "oh, no, I mean, they're, they're a friend, it's not a big deal. we want to go on a trip, but like, you know, it's, it's just, it just happened to be that they also wanted to go. and the timing lined up." there can be a lot of ways that we minimize our role in things like, escalating with another partner or building other relationships. In an attempt to take care of them, it can be lying to them.

You know, I think minimizing in that way, essentially omits a reality that is important for them to at least have on their radar. when it becomes clear, not if but when it becomes clear that oh, this person is not just a friend. or whatever minimization we have characterized it to the scared partner - when that becomes clear that that's false, the fear and anxiety of the other partner will skyrocket up. Because that can feel like deception, that can feel like betrayal. that can feel like you've just demonstrated you have the ability to mislead and lie about it.

Maybe it's not so big as at a structural level, but maybe at a situational level, or an emotional level. describing what we want to do or where this is going - so "how can I

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take care of you in that?" that's usually how I frame it. "is now a good time to check in about relationship stuff? I really want to make sure that you know that you're safe, that I'm not going anywhere," I'll start with a grounding. And then say, the uncomfortable thing that can be difficult on the front end, or like front loading the discomfort. but it can really, really prevent partners from fearing each other or resenting each other. or from it appearing to be this binary choice at some point, me or them. we play a role in, if that were to ever come to fruition.

So similar to minimizing is withholding or omission altogether. That can happen when there's a higher stakes situation, "oh, this partner fears how strongly I'm starting to feel about that partner. And then I went ahead and had barrier free sex with that partner." That is, I mean, point blank period relevant information for all sexual partners to know, if there's barrier free sex. I think that's why I chose that example, because it is so clear that is relevant information for partner A to know.

So if Partner A is scared, and Partner B is a growing relationship, and now there's been this barrier free sex for the first time, we need to tell Partner A. and that can be really tempting to withhold or delay or omit altogether, because of similar reasons as minimization. of just, "I don't want to deal with how hard that conversation is going to be, or they might lose trust in me, or they might pull away. I fear the consequences of starting that conversation, or I fear how big their reaction will be, or, you know, I don't want them to be crying all night." Understandable, something I could empathize with, reasons to withhold or omit. And we can't do that.

I mean, you could. you could lie, you're grown, I ain't your mama. But if the goal is to - as a hinge - minimize or avoid the possibility that we are setting metamours up to have conflict, if that's the goal then we need to own what we're doing and have transparency to the extent that we've agreed to have transparency. and to have transparency proactively to the extent that it will impact other partners. sexual health being a big one.

So while it's also a valid conversation to have about - if our partner is making it hard to tell them things, right? If they are having a huge reaction, and yelling and crying in a big way, and it makes the conversation impossible to continue... If it really disincentivizes or makes it like more of a lift for you to tell them what they have requested that you be transparent about. but that's a different conversation than actually literally disclosing. And it's, it's just a lie. It's just cheating if we don't disclose what we've agreed to disclose.

And so in this way, the hinge partner plays a very big role in how relaxed things feel. How calm or secure a partner feels about your relationship to another one. So at the

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risk of redundancy, I do want to reiterate, this video is about hinge behaviors relative to meta conflict. But I don't want to imply that a hinge always plays a role in metamour conflict. people are allowed to have their own dynamic and just disagree, or personalities clash. and that could have nothing to do with the fact that they share a partner. This is also not intended to blame the hinge entirely, and absolve metamours from being assholes to each other. That's not what I'm saying, either.

I just want to be mindful, because often we are hinges at some point or another. And how can we ensure that we're keeping our side of the street clean? insofar as what role we could play, in either generating conflict or exacerbating and making it worse. So that's what comes to mind for me today. I hope that it's helpful. I welcome your feedback and contributions. I thank you again for being here. So sending you lots of love. Have a beautiful week. Bye