

CARE & FEEDING OF THE POLY PERSON

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INTRODUCTIONS

- Wyatt George, M.S.
 - Counselor at Wellspring Counseling Center that specializes in working with gender, sexual, and romantic minorities
 - Personally involved with the poly community for about 7 years
- Class Introductions
 - Name
 - Pronouns, if you'd like
 - If given the option, would you rather travel back in time to meet your ancestors or travel into the future to meet your descendents?

STANDARD CULTURAL VIEW OF RELATIONSHIPS

- The Relationship Escalator
 - Defined
 - Preset trajectory relationships are supposed to follow in our culture
 - Steps of the Escalator
 - 1. Making Contact
 - 2. Initiation
 - 3. Claiming and Defining
 - 4. Establishment
 - 5. Commitment
 - 6. Merging
 - 7. Conclusion
 - 8. Legacy

STANDARD CULTURAL VIEW OF RELATIONSHIPS

- The Relationship Escalator
 - Hallmarks often found on the Escalator
 - Sexual and Romantic Exclusivity
 - Merging Life Infrastructure and Identity
 - Hierarchy
 - Sexual Connection
 - Continuity and Consistency

How are some ways the relationship escalator has impacted your current or past relationships?

STANDARD CULTURAL VIEW OF RELATIONSHIPS

- Monogamy is exceedingly rare in other species
- In cultures outside of the West, polyamory is more common

So why is monogamy so prevalent in Western societies?

STANDARD CULTURAL VIEW OF RELATIONSHIPS

- Reasons for the Development of this Phenomenon
 - Economic Reasons
 - Media
 - Ethics / Religion
 - Origins in ancient Greece and Rome prior to the spread of Christianity
 - View of Power in our Society
- We are a culture that fosters codependent relationships

CHANGING HOW WE VIEW RELATIONSHIPS

- The components of the relationship escalator are not inherently bad!!
- What are our responsibilities as poly people?
 - Responsibilities to others
 - Responsibilities to self

HOW DO WE CHANGE THIS?

- Placing a greater emphasis on self and understanding our needs and boundaries
 - Needs
 - Examples: Acceptance, Acknowledgement, Adventure, Community, Closeness, Desire, Encouragement, Flexibility, Honesty, Openness, Peacefulness
 - Boundaries
 - Rules vs. Boundaries

CREATING A CULTURE OF PERSONAL AUTONOMY

- **Autonomy**
 - Definition
 - Research on Autonomy and Relationships
 - Relationship Satisfaction
 - Conflict Resolution
 - Sexual Satisfaction

CREATING A SELF GUIDE

- Developing your User Manual
 - Background / History
 - Past Relationships
 - Positive & Negative Takeaways
 - Family of Origin
 - Other Major Shaping Events
 - Current Relationships
 - Breakdown of Current Important Relationships
 - Descriptors, if that's your thing
 - Can include any negotiated parameters or expectations

CREATING A SELF GUIDE

- Personal Needs
- Personal Boundaries
- Cheat Sheet / In Case of Emergency Sheet

COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS

- Active Listening
- Sandwich Method
- “I” Statements
- Ask Open Ended Questions
- Provide Safe Spaces for Communication
- Follow Through with Actions

ACTIVITY