

INTRODUCTION

We use strong words to describe sexual infidelity: adultery, betrayal, and cheating, just to name a few. At some level, we accept that monogamy is difficult for many men and women. We also expect people to be monogamous if they want to have a successful relationship. However, we were not taught how to be monogamous. We are not given training on how to navigate the myriad of desires that might compel us to have sex with someone other than our partner. We are surrounded by conservative assumptions that monogamy is easy on one hand, and a thriving sex and pornography industry on the other.

Most of us have probably learned that it hurts our partner to hear about our attractions to others. Our partner's fantasies hurt us, and it devastates us if they have sex with others or leave us for a new lover. Our culture is saturated with sexual tension and the challenge of how to have a monogamous relationship. We don't talk about it because we would prefer to see it as our neighbor's problem. We wouldn't want our partner to feel threatened or think that we are one of those weak people who may go astray. We may also prefer to keep up appearances and insure that the world views us as a "happy couple." We

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have had little help in identifying and resolving the challenges we face.

On top of this, the sexual vitality of a relationship tends to wane once the “honeymoon” is over. This stagnation combined with the tendency to be attracted to others drives people to move on to new partners and lose the richness that long-term relationships provide. If we suppress our sexuality or our attractions to others, it just adds to the problem by dampening our current sexual connection.

There are solutions that include several aspects of relationships. We need tools for creating strong, intimate relationships; we need to learn how to maintain intimacy in current relationships; and we need support for dealing with non-monogamous feelings. This book is about all of this. It is about how to sustain and deepen intimacy and work through non-monogamous feelings. It is about understanding attractions, learning from them, and creating a new context where attractions can be a source of personal growth. My purpose is to help you resolve what fuels your attractions. The book also includes deep relationship work that will support any relationship need or goal.

Accepting Sexual Attractions

Dictionaries define monogamy as being married to one person at a time. I am using the term to address sexual partnership and define monogamy as having one lover. It is also important to note that I am not necessarily criticizing people for having more than one lover if that is their choice, unless they profess to be monogamous but are not. In all

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cases, my goal is to increase our understanding of what drives us to be monogamous or not and how to continue to grow toward ever increasing intimacy in our relationships.

My focus will be slanted only slightly more toward the challenges that monogamous men face, partly because I am a man, and partly because the common perception is that men have greater difficulty maintaining monogamous relationships. If we could remove the pain that adultery has caused from our history, we would live in a much-improved world. If we could address the challenges involved in creating and sustaining monogamous relationships, many of us would be much happier. It is fair to say that men have affairs more often than women, although our sexual issues and patterns have resulted in affairs by both genders. It is also helpful to address the issues beyond their connection to gender because sometimes it is a woman who is more attracted to others, is having affairs, or wants a deeper sexual connection than her partnership currently has. In particular, I will address some male dilemmas as well as monogamy challenges from a gender-neutral perspective. This book is also about how to sustain a monogamous relationship when your partner desires less sex than you do.

I believe that monogamy has deep spiritual and psychological value, and that creating a vital monogamous relationship can be challenging. I have been in monogamous relationships for most of my life, including a marriage of sixteen years. I will share some of the challenges I have faced over these years. As my friend and teacher Hal Stone put it, "Monogamy is painful." Hal is the only person I have ever met who was more honest about monogamy and his erotic attractions to other women than I was, and since hearing his honesty, I have become more honest myself.

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I include parts of my story as relevant case studies or chronicles. I believe the teacher or researcher does not sit outside of his or her topic, and a study is more objective when we know the position of the teacher or reporter. When a teacher's position is explicit, we are better able to consider our own feelings. If teachers don't speak about themselves, it implies that they have completely mastered their topic. If a teacher shares their own struggle with the information, it helps students become more accepting of themselves and go into greater depth.

When I use examples of clients or students, I have changed their names and omitted any details that would reveal their identity. I will be honest in the telling of relevant parts of my history, and I have also changed the names and some of the details of the other participants. I hope my honesty helps you connect more deeply with how this material can apply to you, and that you will be encouraged to explore your own chronicles.

There may be those who assert that this book is unnecessary because monogamy is easy. If monogamy is easy for you, I congratulate you, but I suggest the possibility that the lack of conflict does not necessarily mean real peace. Often it means extreme dissociation from something that is too uncomfortable to deal with. My intent is to bring taboo sexual feelings of non-monogamy out into the open so that they can be accepted and put into a perspective that allows us to have them and remain monogamous. It will be easier to understand parts of this book if you can already relate to the issue of having non-monogamous feelings.

I explore some of the virtues of monogamy and difficulties monogamous couples face, in addition to many of the anthropological, cultural, and sexual issues that intersect

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and make up the anatomy of monogamy. The last sections of the book, Facing the Challenge and Additional Resources, will include a variety of tools that you can use to support yourself in maintaining a monogamous relationship.

If you're not sure whether this topic is relevant to you, I can simplify it by offering two categories into which most monogamous people could fit: those who accomplish monogamy by cutting off their erotic/romantic feelings or (their) connections to other people, and those who deal with the difficult issues of having erotic/romantic feelings toward people other than their partner. For example, I have never really bonded unconditionally with a female friend without also having the awareness of her as a sexual being with whom it would be enjoyable to make love. Noticing this aspect of my connection and not "freaking out" about it is essential to my remaining a friend in the fullest sense of the word. If I were to avoid my sexual feelings, I would enter a state of distance or withdrawal. I have seen monogamous people judge, dislike, or even quarrel with friends and associates as a means of remaining at a safe distance sexually. This is much the same dynamic as when some fathers fight with their daughters, particularly in puberty, in order to keep their sexual attraction repressed and maintain safe boundaries. Mothers do this, too, but this behavior appears to be more common with fathers.

Avoiding our attractions creates stagnation, and intimacy wanes as resentments build. It may happen that attractions to certain types of people keep occurring. I do not suggest that we act on our attractions in order to "get them out of our system." Both denying our attractions or acting on them have the likelihood of weakening or destroying our relationship with our partner. Instead, I am presenting a

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third option: when we learn what drives attractions, we learn things about ourselves and our needs that can potentially deepen our relationship with our partner. Attractions can be viewed, accepted, and even appreciated as a gift, which when opened and looked at, can reveal to us qualities that are needed but have been missing from our monogamous relationship. Working on developing those qualities together can deepen the intimacy and joy that we experience with our partner. In the process, the object of the attraction becomes less important because the attraction is no longer driven by the feelings of lack in our relationship.

These concepts also apply to same-sex relationships, and I intend to write without heterosexism or homophobia. You may notice my use of unique pronouns or vocabulary, and I will not assume that a marriage is between a man and a woman. To me, a marriage is any emotionally committed relationship whether legally recognized by the state or not. Also, to give an even subtler example, when I write about a child's guardian or parent(s), I do not assume that the child has a father or a mother in a traditional sense. A child may be in foster care. A child's parents can be any combination of committed men or women. A father can be absent or even just a sperm donor. A child can have one, two, or more mothers. Or its mother may be a biological surrogate only and a child may have one or more fathers. I feel it is very important for heterosexuals to get comfortable with this kind of vocabulary and take themselves out of being "the norm" or "the only," just as we do when we take white men out of "the center" when we stop assuming that all Medical Doctors are white men.

The focus here is on relationships and more specifically sexual desire in relationships. There is nothing wrong with

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a man or woman having more testosterone or sex drive than their partner. In fact, based on the principles of how we are attracted to someone who has energies that are opposite ours, we are likely to enter long-term relationships with someone with a greater or lesser sex drive than our own. The anthropological and social perspective that men are often more sexually motivated than women is part of this book, but this is also an unfair generalization. I will discuss relationships where one individual, regardless of gender, is more sexually interested than the other. I will offer insight and tools about how couples (and singles) can create balance in their sexual desires and sustain monogamy regardless of the nature of their sexual feelings.

All feelings are innocent in nature, and sexual feelings are normal. My goal is to help you, the reader, release subconscious sexual shame and help you identify whether you feel, on some level, as if you should apologize for being sexual. This is an important step for all of us. It is completely innocent to be sexual, and here we will explore the differences between this innocence and our behavior. The more innocent we feel, the less likely we will behave in ways that cause others pain. Feeling innocent about our sexuality is also a key aspect of our feeling worthy of love in general, and worthiness helps us attract a committed and monogamous partner.

We have all had numerous forces that have suppressed our essential nature as sexual and physical beings. This book pushes against our history of sexual suppression and repression. It is an exploration of embracing sexual innocence while maintaining monogamous relationships, and it will offer insights on how best to do both. Whatever

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your relationship to your sexuality, I hope to support you in creating a deeper connection with your sexual innocence.

This book is about more than sexuality and monogamy. Many couples will notice that, as they work with sex and intimacy issues, the same dynamic occurs in other areas, like communication and finances. This is because sexuality issues are governed by core patterns or relationship dynamics. A couple's basic issues will affect virtually every area of the relationship. Sex and monogamy are deep and important issues to explore, and addressing them will also help address other relationship patterns.