

More Than Two to Tango: Is polyamory heartwarming or heartbreaking for a couple?

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ABSTRACT:

When learning tango, switching partners is a must. The more partners you dance with, the better you get at it. **In a way, this is perhaps the base of consensual non-monogamous (CNM) romantic relationships. Considered here is whether this is the beginning of a couple's greatest growth or the beginning of the end.**

While public conversations about CNM are increasingly visible, much remains in the shadows of the clinical conversations amongst colleagues of the psychotherapeutic community. This presentation offers a concise overview of CNM, before moving into a psychodynamic enquiry and open discussion. Clinical vignettes illustrate the interplay of aggression and love through the lens of Otto Kernberg's (1991) writings on object relations. Attachment is explored with reference to Jessica Fern's (2020) and Anna Flemming's (2016) work. Themes of desire, love, sex, fidelity, and negotiated agreements — or their lack of — are examined for their clinical and theoretical implications.

BIO:

Gabriela Mercado is a registered psychotherapist, clinical supervisor, and sex therapist with over two decades of experience. She has worked at the Burnett Centre, NZ AIDS Foundation, Sex Therapy NZ, and Sexual Health ADHB. Gabriela is a former President of APANZ and served on its Council until recently.

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