

5 Things To Know About Open Relationships Before Taking the Plunge



If it seems like just about everyone is talking about open relationships these days, it's definitely not your imagination. Every day seems to find yet another social media contact, acquaintance, or celebrity opening up about their own preference for open relationships, and with good reason.

Open relationships offer modern, forward-thinking people an approach to love and sex that makes a lot more sense to them than traditional monogamous relationships do, so it's only natural to wonder whether it might make sense for you and your partner as well. Here's a look at what you need to know before jumping in feet first.

1. Open relationships don't work for everyone

While open, non-monogamous relationships really do work better for many people, it's important to realize that they're not for every person or every relationship. They're certainly not a cure-all for a monogamous relationship that's troubled or failing because of jealousy, anger, trust issues, or fear of abandonment. They're not a fit for certain personality types either.

If either you or your partner just isn't wired for non-monogamy, opening up the relationship regardless will only cause trouble. The person who isn't really on board won't "get used to it" or "learn to like it". In fact, they'll likely feel compelled to end the relationship altogether at some point because of it. This is something that should only be attempted by two people who are equally eager to give it a try for their own reasons.

2. Open relationships aren't easier than traditional ones

There's no such thing as a relationship that's easy all the time with zero hiccups or issues ever. Taking monogamy out of the equation doesn't mean never having to worry about issues like infidelity or jealousy again. Even open relationships come with rules and boundaries that need to be respected.

If you do decide to enter into an open relationship, make sure you discuss the ground rules in detail. Where is the line for each of you as far as what constitutes cheating? How open do you each want the other to be when it comes to encounters had outside of the primary relationship? Non-monogamy isn't about throwing rules out the window so much as it's about redefining them.

3. People in open relationships need great communication skills

Communication is the key to any healthy relationship whether it's monogamous or not, but it's especially important if you're going to go the non-monogamous route. If you have trouble talking about sex, expressing your needs, or processing complicated feelings of any kind, then an open relationship really isn't for you.

Open couples with successful relationships are experts at not only expressing their own wants, needs, and feelings, but at processing their partner's as well. Even if they've adopted a "don't ask, don't tell" policy about sex had outside of the primary relationship, they check in with each other regularly to make sure everything's still good for all involved. They also talk things out when either person hits a snag.

4. Open relationships and polyamorous relationships are not the same thing

Although people do tend to get the two confused a lot, being polyamorous isn't the same thing as being in an open relationship. A polyamorous couple dates and has sex outside of their primary relationship, but they're usually at least open to the idea of forming long-term emotional connections with some of those people. An open couple is almost always only interested in sexual encounters only as far as activity outside the relationship.

It's up to every couple to decide which of those two options sounds right for them. However, most open relationships allow for emotional connection only within the primary relationship. Make sure you and your partner thoroughly discuss the differences before making any decisions.

5. Feelings can still develop within open contexts

If you're the type of person who can have sex with someone without feelings being involved, you likely already know it. Just understand that sometimes feelings have a way of popping up when you least expect them, especially if you're sleeping with anyone multiple times, as opposed to simply enjoying the occasional one-night stand.

It's important to have a game plan in place just in case that should happen with anyone in particular. In most cases, open couples agree to end any connections where feelings are starting to develop on either end. Others decide to stick strictly to one-night stands and hookups to reduce the likelihood of that happening in the first place.

If you and your partner do decide opening things up is right for you, be prepared to fall in love with the freedom it will bring you, both as individuals and as a couple. Just make sure to talk things out thoroughly first and keep the lines of communication open every step of the way.