

# Understanding Polyamory

## Unitarian Universalists and Responsible Multi-Partnering

### **What is *polyamory*?**

*Polyamory* is the potential for loving more than one person within a given period of time. Here we'll define "love" as a serious, intimate, romantic, stable, affectionate bond which a person has with another person or group of people. *Responsible non-monogamy* is another way of saying polyamory, and it is used to distinguish polyamory from "cheating."

Polyamory is a general term covering a wide variety of relationship styles, including group marriage (polyfidelity), open marriage, expanded family, intimate network, and some kinds of intentional community.

Polyamory is a relationship choice available to people of any sexual orientation. Sometimes language familiar to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people is used to describe aspects of living as a polyamorous person (such as "coming out" as polyamorous). However, there are polyamorous people of all sexual orientations, just as there are monogamous people of all sexual orientations.

### **What is the connection between polyamory and Unitarian Universalism?**

Unitarian Universalists are drawn together by the shared need to discover our own truth rather than accepting any existing dogma. We come together to share our findings, but primarily we come together to share our questions. Is it any wonder that some of us also reject dogma and choose to live in the questions in the sexualoving aspects of our lives? Many polyamorists practice, in diverse ways, a strong integration of sexuality and spirituality.

### **Who are you people?**

We are Unitarian Universalists for Polyamory Awareness (UUPA), a national organization of Unitarian Universalists interested in polyamory. UUPA is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

### **What is your purpose?**

We provide social support to each other as we educate about polyamory within the Unitarian Universalist denomination. Polyamorous people share an affectional orientation that is not universally respected. Children have been taken away from polyamorous parents by the courts, and polyamorous people are often afraid of the implications of coming out as "poly" at work and in their UU congregation.

UUPA's purpose is to help fulfill this mission of the Unitarian Universalist Association with respect to family and relationship structures:

"The Association declares and affirms its special responsibility, and that of its member congregations and organizations, to promote the full participation of persons in all of its and their activities and in the full range of human endeavor without regard to racialized identity, ethnicity, gender expression, gender identity, sex, disability, affectional or sexual orientation, family and relationship structures, age, language, citizenship status, economic status, or national origin and without requiring adherence to any particular interpretation of religion or to any particular religious belief or creed."

*Rule G-2.3  
UUA Bylaws*

Our vision is for Unitarian Universalism to be the first poly-welcoming mainstream religious denomination.

### **What are some practical tips for poly-friendly people?**

- 1) Say "partner or partners" instead of "couple."
- 2) Support multiple-person commitment ceremonies.
- 3) Ask a poly person about his or her life. Ask about the person's partner(s) as a way of affirming the importance of those relationships.
- 4) Speak up if someone reveals an irrational fear of polyamory. Be aware of subtle and institutional forms of discrimination against polyamorous people.
- 5) If polyamory brings up strong negative emotions for you, gently explore those feelings by talking with someone you trust.

### **How can I learn more?**

For more information on UUPA, including how to become a member, contact us at:

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