

Sexuality as Spiritual Practice

To be asked to give a sermon on sexuality is more than a request to relay stories of my experiences as a queer polyamorist, it is a request to define sexuality as a form of spiritual practice.

Sexuality as spiritual practice.

As UU's we are often asked to define what spiritual practice means to us. I am asked this as frequently as I am asked to explain my sexual identity.

Too many times I hear these two components of our lives defined not by what they are, but by what they are not. Unitarian Universalism is *not* stringent to a particular dogma, it is *not* meant to oppress, and it is *not* Christianity. Polyamory is *not* cheating, it is *not* promiscuity, and it is *not* monogamy. Why do we *not* instead answer in the affirmative by saying what we are?

So why does a group of atheists and humanists attend a church with recent roots in the Abrahamic religions? I guess that many of us would include in our answer that we attend UU congregations to (a) build community and (b) nurture individual growth.

For me, these two elements of our spiritual practice are best expressed in our seventh principle: respect for the interdependent web. Never have I known an interdependent web stronger than that of polyamorous relationships.

When you ask a poly person about his or her relationships you will often receive a map with multiple shapes, overlapping lines and a complicated legend that, perhaps unfortunately, resembles a business organizational diagram of upper management bureaucracy. The lines connect close friends and family as well as lovers and partners. The relationship classifications assigned to each name are fluid, changing overtime from friend to lover and back again as more names and lines are added.

When you ask a poly person about his or her relationships you will be handed an interdependent web. With every new lover comes an additional network to the web. My romantic partners may become her running partners. Her lovers are the ones helping me with the dishes at family potlucks. Recipes are shared, errands are shared, responsibilities are shared, support is shared. The love in her communities extends to and is reciprocated by my own.

With so many people to love it is easy to neglect the vertex of the web; the point representing yourself. Polyamory acknowledges that the health of one portion of the web is *interdependent* on another and thus requires a commitment to support all names on the map. In giving this support it is easy to lose our own *independence*; the independence of thought and love that led us to the relationships to begin with. We forget self-care. We forget this in all webs, even those with only one romantic partnership instead of several.

I have learned and continue to learn more from individuals in my polyamorous network than professors and books could ever teach. But it is only after I have taken time to nurture myself and reflect on these teachings that I am able to recognize them as such. We must have the confidence to be alone. We must have the confidence to grow from that solitude. We must have the confidence to love ourselves in the same way we expect our partners to.

My spiritual practice includes the built communities and individual growth that my sexuality offers me.

Let us pray:

May we be...

... free from the idea that religion is handed over from someone else.

... free from the false hope that some lottery will heal any hurt in the heart.

... free from the idea that we are finished, finalized, complete and done.

... free to offer love's healing to a cynical, broken world.

... free to grow in spirit.

... free to offer our lives as generous gifts to each other.

May it be so, blessed be, and amen.