



In reality, non-monogamy is a **cultural shift** that recognizes that there are numerous types of relationship structures, and that monogamy is not the "goal" type, neither is it the most natural, common, or healthy.

- Non-monogamy** is often portrayed as:
- a taboo or unusual alternative relationship structure.
 - a substitute for a "real" relationship.
 - only for people who are not committed to each other.

Myths about non-monogamy:

Why did monogamy become our cultural default?

In many cultures, both throughout history and across the globe, monogamy is not the default.



8,000 years ago – people shift from nomadic life to agriculture; domestic human partnerships begin to emerge but these partnerships look more like strong, familial communities rather than "couples."

500 years ago – the idea of romantic love becomes a social norm. Before that time, marriage is simply a legal contract.

Today – monogamy is intertwined with laws, politics, even medicine and science. It exists not only as a social fantasy, but also as a material, political idea.

Monogamy is often the only structure we are taught, and the only structure recognized in the many social institutions we exist in. It's not surprising that the idea of compulsory monogamy is widespread and pervasive in our Western society.



This is a **very common** idea in our society, right along with **compulsory heterosexuality** or **compulsory cisgenderism**, which work in similar ways dictating people's sexuality and gender identity respectively.

Compulsory monogamy is the idea that it is natural and somehow morally superior to be in monogamous relationships.

Compulsory monogamy is a social mandate, or a pressure we feel to act a certain way, according to collectively imagined ideas of normalcy.

What is compulsory monogamy?

Why is compulsory monogamy harmful?

- Compulsory monogamy asks us to prioritize **one** relationship above non-romantic relationships, like friends or family members.
- It tells us to prioritize our relationship over ourselves; our personality, our desires, or our safety.
- It promises fulfillment once we achieve this standard.



The illusion of fulfillment can lead people to feeling depressed or disappointed when, despite having a happy partnership, they still have wants and needs that their partner cannot fulfill. The prioritization of a single relationship can lead people to becoming isolated or withdrawn from the many human connections that offer love and community.



A zine exploring the social mandate of compulsory monogamy, and the differences between intentional and compulsory monogamy as a relationship structure.

Compulsory Monogamy

a queer sex ed community curriculum zine

Compulsory monogamy is very different from intentional monogamy.

Compulsory monogamy tends to be full of assumptions based on narratives that we are fed through media and other examples. This relationship structure is rarely constructed through conversations between partners.

Intentional monogamy is an agreement between partners to actively choose to be monogamous.

Intentional monogamy recognizes other structures as valid, but just not opportune for this partnership, at this moment in time.

It also recognizes that there is more than one way to be monogamous, and each monogamous relationship will differ according to boundaries, preferences, and the various wants and needs of partners.



“Monogamy is a Patriarchal Myth and Other Things Your Parents Probably Never Taught You” by Stephanie Iris Weiss

“The Difference Between Intentional and Compulsory Monogamy” by C&STC

“Monogamy’s Law: Compulsory Monogamy and Polyamorous Existence” by Elizabeth Emens

Sources:

Is monogamy wrong?

Definitely not!

But it is harmful when presented as the only option.

Forcing relationships into the mould of monogamy without conversations about wants, needs, and boundaries, and without a mutual understanding of the expectations for the relationship can lead to toxic patterns, betrayals of trust, and the many common pitfalls of being in relation with another person.

This is not to say that monogamy isn't valuable and advantageous for some people. It just simply isn't the only option, or the most strategic option.

Non-monogamous relationships don't deter from the parts of relationships that we yearn for: quality time, affection, honesty, romance, and everything else.