**Stages of Poly Relationships**

**Consent, Vulnerability, Consideration**

Unique to our culture is the systematic destruction of the Black family. Although our community has embraced a form of polyamory of sorts - through secret second families, de-facto Polygamy, don’t ask don’t tell dating models, side chicks & side dudes, etc.- we have learned to develop a hard outer shell to combat the pain that comes as a result of this destruction. Todays discussion will focus on the 3 major tools needed to break down these barriers in an effort to build healthy poly relationships.

* Consent
* Consent regarding *you*

Consent is about *you*: your body, your mind and your choices. Your consent is required to access what is yours. The people around you have *agency*: they do not need your consent to act, because you do not own their bodies, minds or choices. But if their behavior crosses into your personal space, then they need your consent.

Most of us will, over the course of our lives, encounter situations- perhaps at work, in our families of origin or on the streets- where we have to put up emotional walls and accept a loss of control over our lives, our minds, or even our bodies. But we should never have to do that in our loving relationships. This may seem obvious, but make no mistake: it’s a radical idea.- Franklin Veaux and Eve Rickert, “More than Two- A Practical Guide to Ethical Polyamory,” (Thorntree Press, 2014) 43.

* Metamours and Consent

...Part of consent means that people have the fundamental right to choose the level of involvement and intimacy they want with *anyone*, and to revoke consent to intimacy at any time, in any moment.

...when someone requires you to have an intimate relationship with both of them as the cost of allowing a relationship with one, they’ve set the stage for coercion. Even if you *want* both relationships at first, what if you change your mind? Requiring both to *continue* as a price for you keeping the one you want, as it grows deeper and more important, builds in a punishment for revoking consent. That’s coercion….- Franklin Veaux and Eve Rickert, “More than Two- A Practical Guide to Ethical Polyamory,” (Thorntree Press, 2014) 403.

* African Americans Openly Consenting to Non-Traditional Relationships

<http://www.ebony.com/love-sex/you-me-and-he-polyamorous-couples-go-mainstream-333#axzz412Bb07Cx>

<http://madamenoire.com/180180/you-and-me-and-she-youre-polyamorous/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/She%27s_Gotta_Have_It>

**Questions for discussion:**

1. Does the idea of “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” run counterintuitive to the idea of consent? Why or Why not?
2. When it comes to consent regarding metamours, the example in this outline covered the consent of a lover in a triad, but what about other lovers outside of a triad? Discuss consent in terms of these other lovers.
3. Do you feel that fear of commitment can be likened to fear of giving consent?
4. Do you feel that hesitation to give consent in our community comes from being scared to be stigmatized by openly practicing polyamory?

* Vulnerability
* Ebony Article- Building Emotional Bridges for Black Men

<http://www.ebony.com/love-sex/building-emotional-bridges-for-black-men-434#axzz412Bb07Cx>

* For Harriet Article- Black Women and Pain: Reflections on Vulnerability

<http://www.forharriet.com/2015/11/black-women-and-pain-reflections-on.html#axzz412Zg0FKS>

* Ted Talks- Brene’ Brown, “The Power of Vulnerability”

<https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability?language=en>

**Questions for discussion:**

1. What are some tools that polyamorous Black men and women use to overcome fears of being vulnerable in a relationship?
2. Is there a way to help these techniques spill over into the greater Black community?
3. Do you feel that rules and agreements limit the level of vulnerability between lovers & metamours?

* Consideration
* Dr. Nadig Article- Relationship Conflict: Healthy or Unhealthy?

<http://www.drnadig.com/conflict.htm>

* Dr. Jacobson Article- How to Heal Relationships: What’s Love and Communication Got to Do With It?

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/walter-e-jacobson-md/relationship-advice_b_3886437.html>

* Huffington Post Article- The 7 Habits of Considerate People

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/08/27/habits-of-considerate-people_n_5710033.html>

**Questions for discussion:**

1. When meeting a new metamour, how can you show consideration?
2. Is it possible to show consideration for a metamour when you feel that consideration is not being shown to you?
3. How does NRE affect our ability to be considerate?