Challenges faced by non-monogamous people . . .

On top of living in a mononormative society, non-monogamous people face many more challenges which, together, can make life harder and more stressful for them. Here are some of the extra challenges non-monogamous people may face every day:

- Stereotypes and discrimination from others.
- Lack of understanding and acceptance from others.
- Dealing with disapproval of family or friends.
- Possible need to hide their relationships from family, friends, or co-workers.
- Lack of external support group, leading to feelings of isolation, alienation, and self-doubt.
- Internal conflicts such as reconciling personal needs and desires with religious beliefs (akin to what many gay, lesbian, and bisexual people may also be facing).
- Internalized feelings of intolerance and disgust (e.g., non-monogamy is unnatural and unhealthy; no one will love or respect me if I choose to do this; I must be slutty, selfish, childish or immature; etc.).

Some myths involving non-monogamy include . . .

- Being in open or polyamorous relationships is not really a valid or natural type of relationship. Monogamy is most natural for human beings.
- People who are in polyamorous relationships (i.e., those who form and maintain loving relationships with more than one person) are unsatisfied with their main relationship.
- Open or polyamorous relationships can only work if both “main” partners are getting the same perks (seeing the same amount of people outside the relationships, or getting similar experiences outside the relationship).
- If you fall in love or develop a crush on someone while you are in a relationship, it means there is something wrong or missing in your relationship.
- Polyamory is a way of avoiding commitment.

** For more information on non-monogamy and its myths and stereotypes, check out the Relationship Diversity Info Kit at The Wellness Centre! **

Online Resources

Modern Poly
http://www.modernpoly.com/
Polyamory Weekly
http://polyweekly.com/
More than Two
http://www.moretanthatwo.com/
Loving More
http://www.lovingmore.com/
LiveJournal Polyamory Community
http://polyamory.livejournal.com/

Online Communities

Nonmonogamy Community on Reddit
http://www.reddit.com/r/NonMonogamy
CPN Poly/Mono
groups.yahoo.com/group/cpnpolymono/
Tobermory (Ontario) Poly
groups.yahoo.com/group/polytobermory
Toronto-Poly
yahoo.groups.com/subscribe/Toronto_Poly
Toronto Ontario Polys
groups.yahoo.com/group/toronto_ontario_polys
Where do you “fit in”?  

In our society, there are a lot of labels and categories into which all of us “must” fit. For example, there are different labels for sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity, nationality, etc. Trying to fit into one of those neat boxes when you really don’t can cause some problems. One of our society’s normative boxes concern relationships. In our culture, monogamy is the relationship norm. However, this may not represent everyone’s reality. In fact, some people don’t self-identify as monogamous, but as non-monogamous. There are many forms of non-monogamy (e.g., open, polyamory, polyfidelity, relationship anarchy, etc.), and they are all normal, healthy, and valid forms of relationships. And no, these relationship types don’t involve infidelity or “cheating”.

Assumed monogamy . . .

Just like sexual orientation, “relationship orientation” (whether you identify as monogamous or non-monogamous) is invisible, and so people tend to assume that you are either “single” (not experiencing any form of intimacy with others), or “taken” (in a monogamous relationship). Just like gay, lesbian, bisexual, and pansexual people, people who self-identify as nonmonogamous (open, polyamorous, relationship anarchists, solo polyamorists, etc.) are invisible and live their lives in the margins of society.

Why do some people engage in consensual non-monogamy?  

- Multiple relationships means more love, more emotional support and nurturing  
- Broader range of emotional and social needs can be met  
- Provides feelings of validation (being desired by people other than one’s primary partner gives an objective indication of desirability and increased feelings of self-worth)  
- Less pressure to be the sole provider of a partner’s needs  
- Sexual variety  
- Option to explore other forms of sexuality (BDSM, bisexuality, etc)  
- New partners and the corresponding new relationship energy (the “high” you can experience from falling in love)  
- Areas of specialization – one partner may like theatre, the other may prefer going to movies  
- If one partner is busy (work, family obligations, etc) one can schedule time with another partner  
- If cohabiting, can share: chores, child care, expenses, etc.  
- Improves communication skills

Who forms non-monogamous relationships?  

Although research shows that bisexual people and gay men are more likely than straight people and lesbian women to form non-monogamous relationships, people of all genders and sexual orientations engage in non-monogamous relationships. Bisexuals, gay men, lesbian women, straights, people of all ages, people with disabilities, etc., all can form non-monogamous relationships.

Some types of non-monogamous relationships include . . .

Open Relationship: This is a general term for relationship styles that are not sexually or emotionally exclusive. However, it usually refers to relationships in which both partners engage in sexual activity with other people, as opposed to both sexual and emotional intimacy.

Polyamory: Literally, this term means “many loves”. In this type of relationship, although there may be sex involved, the emphasis is on forming emotional connections with multiple partners rather than having casual sexual encounters. Being polyamorous is having many committed loving relationships simultaneously, with all parties consenting and aware of each other.

Solo Polyamory: Some people do not wish to have a primary partner or to be in a relationship. Solo polyamorists tend to be very independent people, and although they enjoy relationships, they are content to have dates, lovers, friends, and partners, but don’t consider anyone to be their primary partner. Having a primary relationship is not at the top of their priority list.

Did you know . . .

that polyamory and polygamy are not the same thing? Polygamy involves marriage between one person of one sex to many partners of the other (i.e., one husband with plural wives or one wife with plural husbands), whereas polyamory does not center on marriage, but on having more than one loving relationship at a time. Also, neither gender is prevented from having more than one relationship.