

PEPTALK

GROUP
MARRIAGE
NEWS

Vol. 6, Issue 4

6th Anniversary Issue

JANUARY 1990

PART II

TRIAD TRIUMPH

(Continued from our last issue, this concludes a conversation with the Heartsun Family, a triadic marriage of one woman, Wababa, and two men, Ken and Gree. Wababa & Gree have a 7 year old child, Harmony.)

G: Another feeling that has been coming up lately is realizing how well off we are with three incomes and three parents for one child. Just sitting here talking about it makes me feel like I'm bragging. So many people are struggling in their lives, and it's hard to talk about how well off I am. I guess that's a reason why I don't like to talk about it.

W: It's hard to talk about how good your life is because other people might be jealous?

G: Yeah because there's such a chronic shortage, I feel almost guilty, and especially when I want even more.

W: Well, you don't help other people find it by not talking about it. If you want to help others to find what we have, then you have to be out there with it.

K: And first of all you can't deny it to yourself.

W: Well I do feel a little guilty about that sometimes...about having two wonderful lovers. I have a number of female friends who are very lonely, and I feel like I'm hogging more than my share of the sensitive New Age men, like they are a rare commodity.

G: After all, there are so few intelligent males in this world...

W: And I'm using up two of them! And sometimes they tell me that, they tease me and say "hey, that's not fair! I don't even have one and you've got two!" Or they ask me if they can borrow one.

G: Living in a multiple relationship pushes more emotional buttons than a traditional relationship, although not by necessity. It does so because of our cultural biases. It seems like there is more opportunity to get your buttons pushed when there are more people involved, and when you are swimming upstream from the cultural norm. That can be a con, because there is more emotional work. On the other hand, it can be a pro if you want to get through all these neuroses within yourself that keep you from loving other people.

W: I can't think of any more cons. I really enjoy the process of living together and working things out.

G: The biggest pro for me is that I have been relating to W for quite a number of years, and although it was quite pleasant, there were a number of ways that we were stuck with one another. There were many interlocking patterns that were below the level of consciousness. Having a third partner provided another perspective, and lightened up our blind spots. A basic description of our interlocking patterns would be that we would cover for each other...W would take care of me emotionally and I would take care of her physically. We were afraid to back off from that unrealistic expectation because we didn't want to hurt the other person. Like if you and another person are leaning on each other, and you back off, they will fall over. And now with a third person, we both have the opportunity to back off and let the other person go through the feelings that they need to feel to become more self sufficient without them having the trauma of feeling abandoned. The third person can act as support.

W: I have a big problem with jealousy about other women. I had been demanding G's exclusive attention

"Well I do feel a little guilty about...having two wonderful lovers"

and not even noticing that I was preventing him from really having any friends. Whenever he would go out to be social, even with men, I would get upset. Usually I would rationalize my feelings, thinking that I needed him home because I didn't want to get stuck with all the childcare, or he hadn't given me enough attention lately so it wasn't fair for him to go give attention to other people who were less important...stuff like that. I would give him a lot of resistance whenever he wanted to do something away from me. I wasn't even aware of this until K came. K is much more social, with a lot of friends already, and so when he went out and I had the same feelings about wanting him to stay, it became really obvious that it was a patterned emotion, not a rational need of mine. After all when K was gone, I still had G at home, so I didn't

(CONTINUED TO PAGE 4)

ANNIVERSARY TIME

Another year has passed and a decade of effort to educate and inform about polyfidelity is closing. It's a time to look forward toward new projects and also a time to reflect on all that's been done over the past ten years.

For those of you who haven't heard the story, PEP began as an informal association of folks who were polyfidelitous in Eugene, Oregon at the start of the 80's. At the time, the focus was on having local activities: a regular discussion group, potlucks, and educational presentations for the public. But right from the start we were contacted by individuals and groups from all over the USA. At first we answered all the letters with energy-intense personalized responses, despite the fact that people tended to ask the same basic questions.

We eventually wised up and decided that there was a more effective and efficient way to handle the growing interest in polyfidelity. First, since a large number of our contacts were from people outside of Eugene or even Oregon, we also concluded we would open ourselves up to a national (and even international) membership. So in the summer of 1983 we got formal and began our identity as an educational non-profit organization. Our next immediate step was to publish our first edition of the *Primer*. It was an 8 page tabloid printed up on an Apple II+. This and our *Profile*, which encouraged values clarification as an individual step in the process of family formation, were our mainstays, while the first edition of *PEPTALK* hit the streets later in the same year.

Now of course, our *Primer* is a real book available in bookstores and libraries, the newsletter has expanded its format and readership, and we have members all over the continent and even in Europe. Our annual conference is attended and enjoyed by many. We have been on numerous radio and tv shows, and send out basic information on polyfidelity directly to indi-

Ho Ho Ho. May your myth of choice make you merry.

PEP (Polyfidelitous Educational Productions) is a non-profit educational corporation. We publish learning materials and information about polyfidelity. Our materials describe direct experience and the ideas and theories which have developed from it. (See back page for publications.) Networking is another one of our functions. *PEPTALK* is our official newsletter and is published quarterly. Return postage must accompany all submissions if they are to be returned, and no responsibility will be assumed for unsolicited materials. All rights in submissions, letters, and questions sent to PEP or *PEPTALK* will be treated as unconditionally assigned for publication and copyright purposes and are subject to our unrestricted right to edit and comment editorially unless prior agreements are made in writing. Deadline for our next issue is March 15, 1990. We'd totally love to hear from you! PEP, P.O.Box 5247, Eugene, OR 97405 © Copyright 1989
Editor—Ryam Nearing Layout—Barry Northrop

viduals and groups every day. We reach out to isolated polyfides with on-going ads in many major magazines and also in smaller special interest publications. We field calls and letters from people in crises (see letters to the editor this issue), and do our best to offer them our experience, strength and hope. All in all it's been a good decade and the 90's are a whole new opportunity to share even more.

Some of our projects for this next decade, the final one of this millenium, will be to hold more regional gatherings for members and others interested in the lifestyle, to produce a new video to distribute to individuals and groups interested in polyfidelity, to promote recognition of polyfidelitous marriages in all new domestic partnership legislation, to begin a referral system for regional, peer counseling contacts, to increase our membership and network participants, to always do more and better (do you have some suggestions to share?) and of course to continue our publishing work.

Thank you to all our members and supporters for helping to make this decade one of new and rewarding options in successful, multiple adult committed relating, and here's to even more progress in the 90's! ❖

LIBRARY EDITIONS

PEP's latest targets in getting out the word about polyfidelity are libraries. We have recently received orders from several in the Pacific Northwest and also just obtained a grant from Syntropy Institute to offer donated copies of the *Primer* to 25 libraries in the Bay area in California. Obviously the more books we can distribute, the more people we can reach to share our lifestyle option. Perhaps you'd like to donate a copy to your own local library, order one today! ❖

NETWORK:CONFIDENTIAL

PEP's *Network* service exists to protect the privacy of PEP members and also to still allow for a fairly simple method for individuals to contact each other. Our basic policy is that we give out no names or phone numbers, despite constant requests for contacts from folks all over the USA, except through our network. Also the *Network* is only available to members who themselves have published an entry. In this way, any person making contact through the *Network* is also identified in it with their own ad and an address or phone number. Resources that may interest PEP members are listed in the *Network* so provide ongoing address listings that are not appropriate for the quarterly newsletter format of *PEPTALK*. (We're always open to new groups. Please send us your suggestions!)

READY FOR THAT MUCH INTIMACY?

by Art Rosenblum

Have you heard of the Amish Mennonites' custom of bundling which refers to young people being encouraged to sleep together without having sexual intercourse? It is done on the basis of trust and rarely leads to any problems. What is less well-known is that the Puritans and most of the rural peoples of early America practiced the same custom and even the traveler was invited to share a bed with an eligible daughter. (*Bundling: Its Origin, Progress and Decline in America* by Henry Reed Styles, 1871. Out of print, but available for copy or inspection at Aquarian Research.)

Cuddling or sleeping together without having intercourse is still a pleasant and viable option today. The partners rise in the morning with a feeling of warmth and freedom, knowing that no harm could have been caused. The only problem is that most of us have been programmed to believe it is wrong or too difficult. Those who do it, and there are many, usually keep it secret for fear that others will tease them. But by that fear they deprive others of the affection and pleasure that could be very lovingly shared.

Bundling is an excellent way to begin a new love relationship as it allows time for healthy intimacy to develop before risk or commitment. With family or friends living in the same dwelling, it also provides a safe way to get close to a new acquaintance.

THE PRACTICE RELATIONSHIP

It's so sad that the more we need a lover, the more difficult it seems to find someone that is suitable. That's because the tension of our need makes it more difficult to listen to our own intuition. However, if we get together with someone who may have a similar need and try to help them find a partner, we find that much easier because we are less tense about their need than our own.

For that reason, one way to help one another find a partner is to move in together with another person who is also seeking a partner, even though we feel sure that they are not the right one for us. The relationship may be platonic or sexual as agreed, but not being in love, it is easier to notice disagreements and more possible to practice settling each disagreement the day it happens. Each then attempts to find a partner for the other, and because one is no longer

lonely, it is easier to sense when a suitable mate is at hand, and easier to attract such a person.

Since we are not emotionally so in love with our practice partner during this time, it is easier to be honest with them and sometimes we end up in a lasting love relationship with the supposedly unsuitable temporary. At any rate we surely learn from the experience and that may be better than being alone.

(Excerpted from *Sexuality for a Dangerous Time*, published by Aquarian Research Foundation, described in PEP Network Resource Section) ❖

Two's not enough

DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP LAWS LIMITED!

Newsweek recently published a special edition describing the family in the 21st century. In an article called "Variations on a Theme," gay marriages, single mothers, and skipped generation families were described. Also noted were landmarks in recent legislation giving recognition and benefits to "domestic partners." Unfortunately for polyfides, these new laws consistently limit the number of partners to two.

This number is obviously too low for those of us in groups, but up to this point our group marriage lobby has not been heard. It's sad but true that being a squeaky wheel insures getting the oil and the only way we can insure legal recognition for our marriages is by letting those writing the legislation know we exist.

I strongly urge all PEP members to respond by writing letters to the editor and contacting your representatives every time you read or hear of any action on domestic partnership law. You may want to keep the government out of your life, but they're already there. At this time basic issues like taxes, inheritance, hospital visitation and health decisions, single family residential zoning, and more are all determined by a definition of family as limited to one male and one female. If you're in a group marriage and want to be able to visit your partner in an ICU, share income without tax hassles, live in a house zoned single family, or get health benefits at work for at least one of your partners, group marriage must first be recognized as a legitimate form of family.

(Denmark recently passed legislation legalizing two person, same sex marriages and Norway plans to do the same.) ❖

TRIAD TRIUMPH (continued from page 1)

really need him. But my child-self wanted all of both of their attention all the time! I had to go through some very intense feelings of fear, sorrow and anger. I remember the feeling of having my personal growth accelerated about 100% after K joined us. I hope to work on my jealous feelings gently until I am able to share more easily.

K: Often when people do ask me about the relationship they say "Don't you and G get awfully jealous of each other?" They are really putting themselves into that comment, and saying "I wouldn't be able to stand sharing a partner with someone else...it would be difficult." I say no that we haven't had much problem with that aspect of the relationship. There are other parts that we have had to work on a lot more. And it makes me realize that we must have something on the ball to not be in that possessive place.

W: I think you and G are really special men that you don't have a lot of the standard male programming and you are very conscious and sensitive. Seems like you don't have a lot of ego trips either. A lot of the patriarchal attitude is seeing the woman as an ego boost and the younger and more beautiful she is, the better you are as a man. You are secure enough within yourselves to know that you don't have to wear a woman on your arm.

K: That would be kinda heavy, anyway. A major advantage to a group relationship is having more than one perspective on any issue. Usually we get along about stuff, and there isn't a problem, but if there is a problem then there is usually someone outside it who isn't as emotionally invested in it.

W: Since all three of us are trained counselors, we can be available to each other for that. Many times we spend 15 minutes to half an hour giving each other counseling attention, almost every day. It's a great expansion of the level of available attention in the house, and it's really helpful to have someone to listen to the little upsets or triumphs of each day, right when they happen. I would not recommend anyone trying to have a multiple relationship unless they are very skilled listeners, and are very willing to change and explore their own emotions.

G: Of course when there's another adult in the house, there are all the advantages of communal living...more people to share the childcare with, and even though there are more dishes, there are more people to do them.

K: And even though there are more bills, there are more people to pay them.

G: It just makes it easier that there are people there to take over for you if you need a break. In a nuclear family, the man might be the only breadwinner and feel "God, I can't do this another day, I can't stand it!"

But it's too bad. You have to do it. It needs to be done and there is no one else to do it. And being a single parent is even worse in that way.

W: Yeah, it's like there is no space for falling apart. This way there is a lot of space, and pretty much we can choose to do what we want when we want most of the time.

K: This relationship is really good for our inner children because if you need to you can go ahead and nurture your inner child and the other people can be in their adult selves and take care of things for a while.

W: It just kind of makes life have more padding, it makes it softer. It really feels like an incredible blessing. It makes me feel closer to God, also, because I've had this deep longing for so long...an impossible dream. You know, sometimes you wonder about the benevolence of a God that would give you an unquenchable desire for something that seems unattainable. To see that it is actually possible affirms that God would not give me such a heartfelt yearning without there being a way to fulfill it.

G: Those people who are single parents...it seems like something they kind of end up with without it being a conscious choice. It seems like that with us also, that this is something we kind of ended up with, although we did affirm it and ask for it. It's not much different from finding a relationship with one person. You can't force it to happen, you just have to be lucky enough to run into someone who you are compatible with at the right time.

"We asked her if she wanted to have...an extra mommy, and she said 'Sure'"

W: It's been wonderful for H to have another Daddy-friend who really cares about her. It's been great for us as parents to share the responsibility of caregiving, especially since K has better attention for children than either of us do! It helps make it so that H is usually with someone who wants to be with her, and so she doesn't have to play alone much unless she wants to. Each adult has special skills to offer her...like K likes to take her swimming and I don't like to go swimming. She gets to help G work on cars and she loves to help me bake things or work with the computer. It's really been enriching for her. We asked her if she wanted to have more parents, like an extra mommy, and she said "Sure!" Although I think she has problems trying to explain K to other people. She once asked me "Is K my step-daddy?" and I said "Well, sort of. He's really more like your extra daddy." I end up calling him a co-

parent a lot.

K: This relationship has given me a lot of support and slack, a lot of stability and a tremendous amount of personal growth. I've recovered a lot of memories and figured out my life and become more stable in my job and consistent in my spiritual practices. It gives me the joy of being a parent without really being a parent. It's kind of nice that when something breaks G fixes it, because I don't like to and he does.

W: In a lot of ways it's easier to see your other partners as people instead of roles. We end up being in traditional male and female roles to some extent, because of our training and our background, but it's also easier to stay out of that and to relate more as three people rather than the wife and the husband.

G: There are actually enough people here to shift roles with. Often in a two person marriage, your role fills up all your time. It's hard to change roles, because it takes extra learning and usually people are too maxed out.

W: Like our friend was saying the other day, her husband works full time and gets really good pay and he doesn't have the option of working half time, even though he is bored and so is she, and they would like to split the work for money and the work at home. If she tried to get a full time job, she wouldn't get paid nearly as much and couldn't support the family.

G: That's the way society prevents role flexibility.

W: We do pretty well with distributing the home work with the outside work, so that none of us has to stay home all day doing housework. I stay home working my three home businesses, and K and G go out to work full time jobs. But at least their jobs have some flexibility. We figured out all the hours that it takes to keep the house and do the cooking and we split them up according to which ones we all minded doing the least. Lately it's gotten into a feeling of being much more solid and secure since Ken has decided to stay with us and consider himself to be married with us. It just feels like normal everyday life, not a lot of ups and downs. Just knowing that we are there for each other and helping each other through daily life. I used to have a sense of watching it, to see when it would fall apart, but now I don't worry about that anymore.

G: It's taken a certain sophistication to honor and acknowledge the two levels of relationship that have been going on at once. There is the stability and tradition of W and my relationship, while simultaneously honoring the newness and the courtship with K. There are two very different levels of relationship going on at once. It's hard not to compare them, like saying why isn't this new relationship developed like the other? Or why can't the old one be as stimulating as the new one?

W: There is something magical about this lifestyle to

“There is something magical about this lifestyle. Whenever you are doing something that is different from the norm, there is a magic to it, a freedom and a sense of power”

me, not just because I've wanted to do this since I was an adolescent, and never dreamed it could really happen. But also because it is living an alternative, it's living a contradiction to all the standard programming and the way that everyone expects you to be. Whenever you are doing something that is different from the norm, there is a magic to it, a freedom and a sense of power. I always have a feeling if we can do this thing that is so delicate and complicated, even for few years, we can do anything!

G: What a maniac. (laughter)

W: Also, when you unite your energies, you become much more powerful in being able to manifest your dreams in life. Not only the daily life is easier, but things like going to school for awhile, or a creative project, or anything else that you might want to create. There is a sense of anything being possible. It gives you freedom.

*Heartsun family can be contacted at PO Box 1084
Cottage Grove, OR 97424 ❖*

LOST HORIZONS FOUND

A book called *The Dynamics of Polyandry: Kinship, Domesticity, and Population on the Tibetan Border* by Nancy Levine describes one of the world's last societies to practice the marriage of a woman to all the brothers in a family. The Nyinba who live near the border of Tibet and Nepal and are Tibetan Buddhists. Polyandry is an ancient custom of their group and most marriages consist of at least two brothers and their wife. Levine describes an absence of jealousy in this society where family unity is deeply ingrained. Women prefer having multiple spouses for the added security and brothers feel a unique solidarity, sharing spouses and children, property, work, and other obligations. ❖

READER'S FORUM

Dear PEP,

It's been very cathartic reading your book and sample newsletter (repeatedly). I was a polyfide in the early 70's without knowing that any others existed. My ex-wife and I courted several potential family members. One woman came very close to joining our family when the courtship stalled out, largely because of lack of communication all around.

I became frustrated and turned into a nerd. As a result, my ex and I stumbled into an unhealthy parody of group marriage with a man who didn't like me and who hadn't been courted through a mutual, intentional process. Furthermore, my ex-wife felt no compunction to practice equality, though I needed it and asked for it. We lasted three months before the situation became too unbearable to continue.

When I left, my world had fallen apart; and yet, mixed with my despair was a strange feeling of satisfaction that I had given my wife the opportunity to help her lover overcome his legal, emotional, and social problems. I could never explain this compersion. My friends wanted to support and comfort me: they felt my positive emotions were simply an arrogance that I needed to preserve my self-esteem.

Group marriage has continued to be in my heart, in spite of the trouncing I received after my first fling with it. But after having been punished so severely for living outside of consensus reality, my impulses have had to follow a subterranean route. How could I admit, even to myself, that I was still emotionally trapped in the apparently self-destructive desire for an anarchistic relationship style that has never existed beyond the pages of a novelist named Robert Rimmer?

But whether I could admit it or not, I have not been able to forget the pleasures of polyfidelitous courtship or of compersion. I've been remarried for eight years now, and I've never cheated on my wife. But I have fallen in love, and I have encouraged her to think romantically about a friend of hers. In both cases, I was acting in a destructive manner because I wasn't in touch with what I really wanted. Both times, I was reacting to emotional accidents rather than acting by mutual intention. What I really wanted was for my wife and I to be courting someone together.

Seeing your ad in Mother Jones was an emotional experience that led me to begin discussing group

marriage with two non-intimate friends. When I found one of these to also be a frustrated polyfide, my entire emotional stability disintegrated. I began writing about polyfidelity in my diary every day and I ordered your book, *The New Faithful*.

Increasingly, though, I needed to discuss my feelings with my wife. When I did, she flipped out. For two days I thought I was losing my second marriage. Then on the second evening, she said, "Okay, I won't be so uptight about this." We've been discussing polyfidelity ever since then, but she sets the pace for our discussion. I tend to pursue ideas with too much intensity.

Anne's advice (from Phoenix, as noted in *The New Faithful*) to ask for what you want, accept the answer and turn up the love has been very helpful. But my wife feels that I'm finally aware of my love for her because of her threats to throw me out. The reality is that I'm extremely relieved that she's listening to what I have to say and considering whether it's true or not. I'm relieved that she's reading *The New Faithful*. And I'm relieved that I can order PEPTALK to our home address instead of to a mailbox number.

And with my relief at being recognized for who I am, I feel an increased emotionality that spills out as love for my wife. Unfortunately, my wife is still monogamous.

In any case, I'm extremely thankful that you've taken the time to write your book and newsletter. Reading them has filled me with a happiness at finding something I thought I had to leave behind.

Canada

Dear PEP,

My wife and I have a very solid 40+ year marriage, with plenty of loving and sex. At the present time the belief in and the desire to participate in a group marriage is strictly my own, as my wife has always found it more difficult to rid her mind of what I call "fundamentalist crap!"

I'm sure there are many others who share this "half a couple problem. I wonder how much effort can be put out, or even how, to reach them? I know in the past, for us, there have been two couples with whom the chemistry between all four would have been perfect, there was great rapport between any combination of the four. We took long motorcycle trips together, skinnydipped, and/or just enjoyed doing nothing at all together. Yes the physical and sexual attraction was there also, but we did not indulge, other

than maybe close dancing with a mutually enjoyed erection.

These friendships are now history due to death, divorce, and relocation, plus the fact that they were almost a generation younger than us (as most of our close friends seem to be). I do believe however, that if any two or three of us had heard of Rimmer or PEP, it sure would have happened. What's that old saying, "born thirty years too soon"? That's us. So, while I am somewhat content to finish the term of our marriage in a monogamous fashion if that is the way the cookie crumbles, I do believe that in the right circumstances, my wife might also enjoy more.

We are practicing nudists and she was once just as mindbound about that until I was able to bring about the right circumstances. Now she is not only a convert, but really enjoys the freedom. (Just a side note, thus far everyone I have contacted in the PEP network is a nudist too.)

So, just as any good marriage should derive and follow from friendship rather than the promise of sexual contact, I think many of us "half couples" could be converted on the basis of seeking friendships with folks who have the physical and mental attributes we enjoy. Of course these would be successful, enjoyable friendships with or without sex. I know in our case we've ever to again develop a friendship as close as those two past ones were, and with the contacts and information now available, the end result would be certain.

So I would say to all of you (fortunate) polyfides, don't be afraid to reach out to those who are still not believers. At least you could be gaining a close friendship, which even without sex ain't all bad.

Sincerely,
Washington

Dear Friends,

Both your letters describe a somewhat common situation for many couples; that is, one person in the dyad is interested in an expanded relationship and the other isn't. Despite the case in these two letters, frequently the female partner is the one who wants to have multiple relationships.

First and foremost in these situations, timing is important. Partners do not necessarily grow or proceed in the same direction at the exact same pace. If you decide that polyfidelity is for you, be sure to make room for your partner to decide yes or no on her/his

own. Pressure from you as a new convert may just entrench your partner more stubbornly in the old security of monogamy.

If you can find out what doubts or concerns your partner has, you may discover that they are based on erroneous assumptions or projections about what polyfidelity is. Many people who just don't understand even the basic concept of group marriage, consider it equivalent to swinging, affairs, or a sure path to divorce. If your partner is a reader, written materials can help dispel these misconceptions. Another sure fire way to cool some of the fears that arise regarding this possible change in your relationship is to meet with other people living the lifestyle or who are seriously interested in it. When your partner sees that polyfides don't have two heads, don't try to jump in bed with them, and don't belittle their concerns, much tension can be relieved and the lifestyle can be discussed on its own merit. Simple friendships with others exploring this lifestyle choice can offer support and give a taste of what benefits a group marriage might bring. Most fears are based on focusing on what might go wrong or be lost; courage and forward motion is achieved by being drawn toward the positive challenges of what can go right.

Alas, at times one partner wants polyfidelity and the other just doesn't. This can be a bottomline difference with no solutions except to go your separate ways, or for one partner to remain in a monogamous relationship and consciously forego the option of group marriage. It is a practical impossibility for a dyad to move into a successful group marriage with one of the partners not truly committed to the lifestyle and its stimulating demands.

—editor

Dear PEP,

I wrote to you a few months ago. I was and still am interested in PEP. I received a sample copy of PEP-TALK, but it was difficult for me to understand and absorb most of what was written.

I have a problem and I know I'm not alone (at least I hope not). I need a support group to help me accept my feelings and to have someone in a similar position to talk to. I believe that your organization might be what I'm looking for but I'm not sure. I can't spell well, and this is a very personal subject for me to discuss with a stranger, but I'm desperate for help and understanding of my problem.

From what I understand about PEP it is for people in

READER'S FORUM CONTINUED...

group marriages. Groups...that's why I hope someone in your organization can give me solutions, the possibility of a positive outcome for my situation.

I am in my early twenties and have been married to a wonderful man for a few years. I love him very much, the problem is that I am also in love with his best friend. I have realized I've been in love with both of them for about a year. They are both wonderful people and I don't want to make a choice between the two.

The three of us have sat down and discussed our feelings together. I love both of them, they both love me. But they aren't bisexual and have no feelings for each other. They feel jealous and possessive of me.

It does not feel wrong to love them both. It feels more perfect than anything in my life has ever been. But I've been brought up to believe that this is wrong! I don't know what to do! I'm torn, my self worth is decreasing, I feel bad, guilty, even greedy for wanting them both.

Why does it seem wrong to love when it seems so right? Is it possible to share? Could this work? Please contact me, or if you can direct me somewhere, please! I need help and understanding before I go crazy!

State withheld by request

Dear Friend,

Yes, it is possible to share and your relationship could work. To connect with others for support, the PEP *Network* is how PEP provides for member contact with other individuals, groups and support resources.

As for your two lovers, they do not have to be bisexual to be in a group marriage together. Many successful groups contain same sex partners who are heterosexual. You say these two have no feelings for each other, but you also say they are best friends. Best friendships are a great basis for relationships of same sex heterosexuals in a group marriage. Please share the PEP materials sent you with your partners and spend time together exploring your lovers' openness to the ideas contained within them. This may seem difficult, but it is very worthwhile and will help you all focus on the real issues you must reach agreement upon if you want to build a three person relationship together. These include deciding whether you each are monogamous or nonmonogamous and many other essential details that will determine your eventual

compatibility.

Your feelings of guilt and greed are products of a society which consistently claims that one to one romantic involvements are the only type of primary adult relationships which are real or allowed. To dump these old programmings requires a large effort and also a basic trust in your own instincts. Please know that most PEP members have had to deal with this type of feeling and confusion at some point in our relationship style development, but that you can move forward and joyously live a polyfidelitous lifestyle with enough commitment, compatibility, and love.

(Note: this person immediately received a counseling and referral phone call and was directed to other PEP members who were open to giving ongoing support)
—editor

Dear PEP,

I am writing mostly in response to my reading of *The New Faithful: A Polyfidelity Primer*. I find it a wonderful piece of work. I cannot claim to be very knowledgeable about literature of this kind, but I have seen a lot of junk and some serious stuff and I can honestly say I've never read anything so impressive as this. If I thought there were people trying honestly to live this kind of life I would want very much to meet and know them. The combination of sensitivity to human feeling and need, plus the practicality of issues addressed, makes it a fine piece of work.

I had some thoughts about it that I would like to share with you that perhaps you yourself might want to respond to. I was a little taken back by the somewhat mechanical character of the pairing arrangements: "A" on monday, "B" on tuesday, etc...if I understood correctly. In Oneida anyone was free at any time to approach another for sexual intimacy. But perhaps you've concluded that this introduces too many occasions for conflict. If this is the result of concrete practice, I would be interested in knowing about it. Indeed, I would in general be interested in knowing how much of the *Primer* is the result of your own personal thinking or reflection and how much represents the distillation of a group reflection. The answer to that question would not affect my judgement of the work's worth, that is, as it is, outstanding, but it is something about which I would be interested in learning more.

On another point, I was very interested in the commitment to group sexual fidelity. As I understood it, new persons are able to be invited to meet and get to know

the group, and eventually perhaps join it, but until the latter stage, sexual intimacy would be ruled out by virtue of the commitment of fidelity to the group. This again strikes me as being perhaps artificial. In fact I would think that in many instances one would have wanted to know about sexual compatibility with a prospective member whom you would consider inviting to join. Perhaps I am missing something here. But if it were possible, I would like to know your further thinking on this.

New Jersey

Dear Friend,

To answer your questions, first a sleeping cycle is an arrangement based on concrete practice. The idea is not so much to avoid conflict as to find and use a simple method for making a daily decision. In polyfidelity, which is by definition a relationships between partners who are equally attracted to and committed to each other partner, there is generally no reason to sleep with one partner more or less than another. For this reason a balanced rotational sleeping cycle is an expression of the feelings of the individuals in the group.

It is a simple way to divide intimate time and once initiated, takes no psychic energy to maintain. This cycle also does not preclude individuals from having sex or other intimate contact at other times which they might arrange. Please remember that not all groups use the type of cycle you describe in your letter. Some all sleep together in a family bed, some have developed other cycles in which time is divided between dyad sleeping nights and family bed nights. Each group develops what pattern suits it best, but any cycle where some individuals were obviously preferring only certain other individuals within the group would clearly show that the relationships were unequal in regard and that the group was not polyfidelitous.

The *Primer* was written after years of living in a polyfidelitous family myself and also after having years of ongoing contact with others also in families. The personal stories included are meant to personalize the experiences and to show where some of the distillations originate. While different families have varying amounts of conflict, adventure, career focus, child orientation, political commitment, and process time, successful families really do have a lot in common. These commonalities, based on concrete experiences of groups who developed at different times in different regions, are expressed in the *Primer* as possible guidance for others.

Fidelity is always a question in many people's minds. One of the values almost all longterm committed groups share is fidelity. Having multiple partners takes a lot of concentration, and generally people in group marriages aren't looking to just have casual sex for many reasons: disease, superficiality of experience, pregnancy, already getting enough at home...etc. As for more involved friend-lover relationships outside the family, these always involve a level of inequity, being by definition secondary. Polyfidelity is generally the choice of individuals who do not enjoy having secondary sexual relationships because of their inherent instability and incomplete nature. In the case of a possible new family partner, sexuality is shared at different points in time by different groups. Usually though, it is only after questions of disease and birth control are settled and all the individuals involved clearly and consciously decide to proceed as part of a courtship rite. While basic sexual compatibility is usually not an issue, trust and bonding problems might come up at this point. These may be worked through or may be a reason to back the relationship off.

The basic point about fidelity here is that it is not some anachronistic rule, but a practical approach to creating a multiple adult family which shares a satisfying home-life for the longterm. It is flexed when everyone involved decides it's a good idea, like at some point in a courtship, and is maintained as a good way to express the unique and special commitment and intimacy of the group.

—editor



EVERYTHING IN A NUTSHELL

MEMBERSHIP (each are for one year)

Please note changes—

- **AUDIENCE** \$10.00
(Receive quarterly newsletter)
- **NEW SUPPORTING MEMBER** \$20.00
(Receive newsletter and new *PRIMER*
Also have access to the *NETWORK* with
one-time \$5 fee and personal entry)
- **NEW FULL MEMBER** \$60.00
(Receives the *PRIMER*, newsletter,
and free entry to *NETWORK*. Also
complimentary copies of all publications
and free entry to annual conference)

MATERIALS

- **PRIMER**—New edition \$7.95 plus \$1.50
(The definitive reference book postage
on the lifestyle)
- **PEPTALK** Membership fee
(PEP's quarterly newsletter)
- **PEP NETWORK** \$5.00 one-time fee
(a quarterly networking directory to Supporting
for members—only available to members; free to
those entering themselves) Full members
- **PEP T-SHIRT: Making Waves** \$10.00
All cotton Beefy-T. M, L, XL

To join or order, make checks payable to PEP and mail to:
PEP, P. O. Box 5247, Eugene, OR 97405

PEP
P.O.Box 5247
Eugene, OR 97405

FIRST CLASS

