Common Topics Addressed in Therapy:

- Boundary setting and communication
- Consent and hierarchy in relationships
- Coping with envy or jealousy
- Integrating and transitioning relationships
- Creating and adjusting relationship agreements
- Time management and scheduling
- Transitioning to CNM from monogamy
- Navigating parenting responsibilities with multiple partners
- Disclosure about being non-monogamous
- Disapproval from family and friends
- Coping with stigma and judgment
- Lack of legal protection for CNM
- Discrimination (e.g., employment, housing, custody)
- Safer sex considerations
- Relating to a partner’s other lovers
- Finding resources and support

For more information, consult resources of the American Psychological Association Division 44 Consensual Non-monogamy Task Force: https://www.div44cnm.org/resources


Consensual Non-monogamy for Mental Health Professionals

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Consensual Non-monogamy (CNM) is defined as a relationship arrangement in which each participant gives informed consent to simultaneous, multiple intimate, romantic, and/or sexual relationships. These arrangements can include polyamory, open relationships, swinging, and relationship anarchy. Some people may desire and/or identify with CNM, but not engage in it.

Those exploring or practicing CNM are often stereotyped and face stigma by healthcare providers (Schechinger, Sakaluk, & Moors, 2018; Vaughan et al., 2019). One in seven people who engage in consensual non-monogamy report discrimination from a mental healthcare provider (Witherspoon, 2018).

The American Psychological Association has approved professional practice guidelines in areas such as multicultural practice (APA, 2017) and working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender clients (APA, 2012; 2015). Research is being conducted to expand this work for individuals engaged in consensual non-monogamy.

Be aware of cultural differences and strive to recognize how consensual non-monogamy intersects with your clients’ other demographics/identities, including sexual identity and expression (including kink), gender identity and expression, race, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, religion/spirituality, ability/disability status, and age.