

She said something like, "Yeah, I didn't, but I liked these olives; I don't know, the olives were good." And he said, "But you don't like them, you never like olives when I give you olives."

Tony laughs. "I didn't care about the date or the sex or anything," he says, "but the olives..."

Actually, it makes a lot of sense. Amy's girlfriend was offering the exact same thing Tony had offered and had been turned down for.

"Jealousy may be an expression of insecurity, of fear of rejection, fear of abandonment, feeling left out," says *The Ethical Slut*. "Jealousy might actually be envy."

Jealousy is certainly an ongoing topic at Portland's Polyamory Circle. Founded three years ago by Laury Weiss, who facilitates monthly meetings with Theresa Reed (aka Portland sex writer Dark-lady), the group is a striking example of the variety of people and intentions going on in the poly world.

Its January meeting included couples who came together, a few who came without their partners and a few singles. Of the 10 participants (attendance generally ranges from 10 to 30), five identified as straight, four as bi and one as bi-curious. Ages appeared to range from late 20s to early 50s.

Two couples had never been before and were looking to meet other poly people. The others were old hands.

"Anybody who wants to can jump in and say, 'Well, this is what I think' or ask questions of the group," explains Weiss. "Sometimes we may do topics that people are interested in...we'll open a can of worms like jealousy or living together or taking responsibility for children or time issues.... Who do you wake up with on Sunday morning, who goes to Thanksgiving dinner, how do you introduce that third person to your family—that sort of thing."

The conversation is generally candid, and you can say as little or as much as you like. For participants it's also just nice to hang out with people who lead a similar lifestyle. (Most *Just Out* readers, I'm sure, can relate to this.)

One male/female couple are looking for a woman they can both have a relationship with. Another are looking for a woman just for the female to have a relationship with.

Other couples regularly engage in love and/or sex with people they're attracted to.

Some have more than one partner they're committed to but do not pursue relationships or sex beyond that, commonly known as "polyfidelity."

Weiss mentions a lesbian couple who have been coming to the group—one of them is looking for a boyfriend with the support of her partner. As many different ways of doing polyamory as there are people.

Weiss began the group to connect with other polys, who he calls a "very invisible minority." He identifies as bi and finds polyamory specifically appealing to bisexuals. Like Tony, the lifestyle comes to him quite naturally.

"It came out of my experiences living communally with people. I developed a real taste for sharing space and idealism about that," he explains, seeing monogamy as largely culturally influenced. "It's very much a factor of environment. We don't see collective role models in the media; we don't see threesomes, even though we're out there."

This is a big subject at the January meeting. A participant named Aaron asserts: "One of the statistics I've seen is that 30 percent of the cultures in the world are nonmonogamous. We go with this presumption that humans are monogamous, and it's just not true. Our culture is monogamous."

Weiss admits, though, that "it's a matter of individual taste. I think it's very culturally influenced, but I think that some people just naturally tend to monogamy—whether heterosexual or gay."

So what about jealousy? The first question that pops into the minds of most monogamous-minded people (or "monos") is "Don't they get jealous?"

The answer is: Of course, sometimes. But talking with your partner and figuring out the root cause of that jealousy is common for polys. Most admit it's not about the other lover so much as they themselves aren't getting something they need. And then there's compersion.

"Compersion can be defined as a feeling of happiness seeing your partner being fulfilled in a way that you're not able to do," explains Weiss. For instance, "If your partner plays chess and you don't, you want to see them in that tournament—you want to see them do well—even though it might not be your interest, even though it might take up some of the time you would like to spend with them. It's a matter of giving the other person space to do whatever they want knowing they will be

back...knowing you're not going to be abandoned just because your love interest has another love interest...taking pleasure in your partner's pleasure.... We think of it as being the opposite of jealousy."

Weiss says he would like to see himself in an intentional living situation with three or four other people. "I call it neo-tribalism. The advantages are just incredible. Multiple incomes, the ability for one person to stop working and go back to school or take care of a child—the flexibility that it offers. And companionship—I think we've really lost that a lot. People in what they call prehistory used to live in tribes, and I think that was a really more satisfying way of living together."

He would argue, though, against polyamory becoming trendy. "I think it's becoming more visible. As a concept, people are either more informed about it or more openly curious."

Back at the coffee shop, a comment from Amy explains part of the importance of the Polyamory Circle to people in the community. "It's really difficult," she says, "to find someone who wants to get involved in a polyamorous relationship who's not already polyamorous."

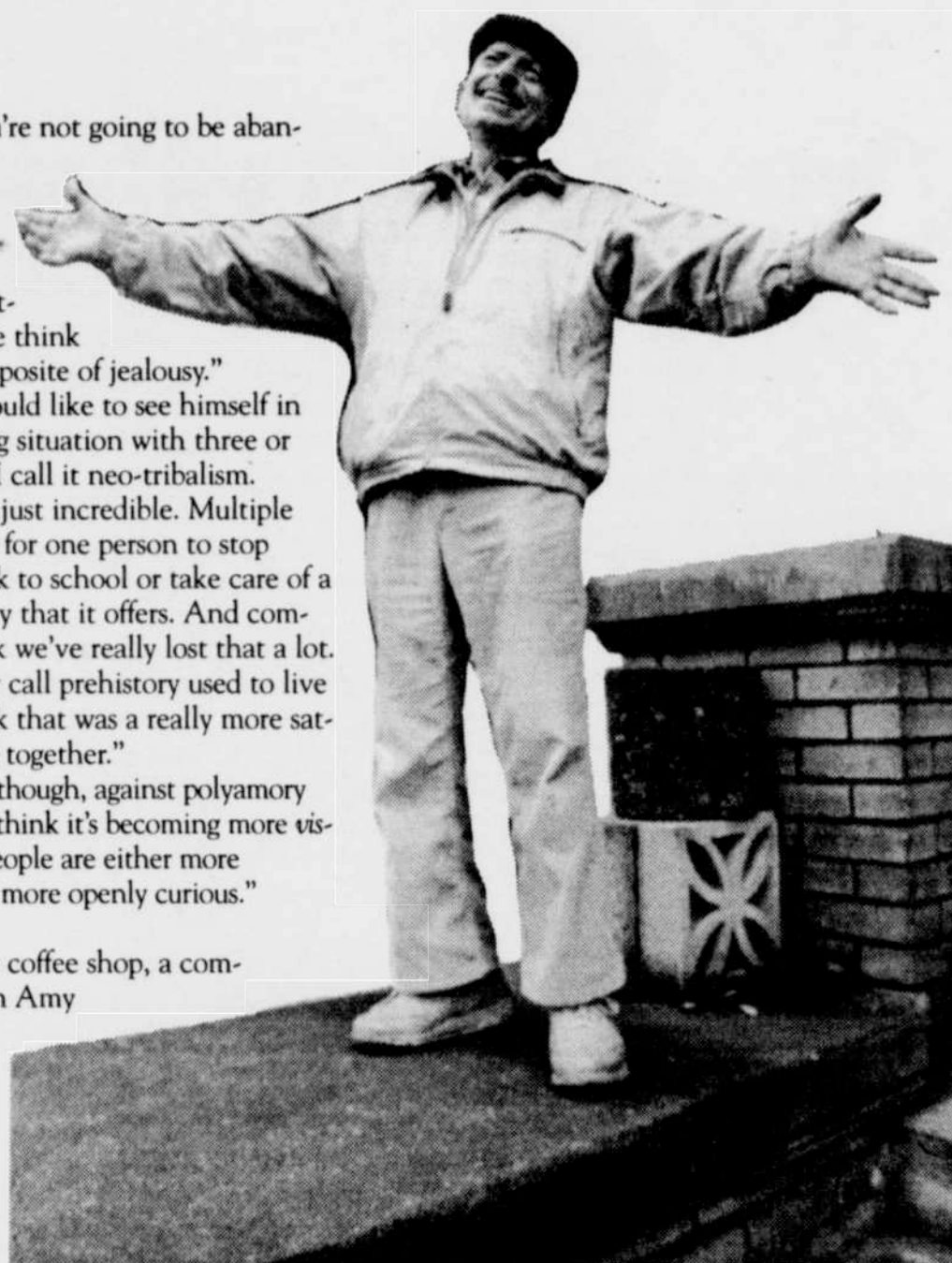
And yet it doesn't always turn out quite that way.

Portlanders Lisa and Will met back in the mid-'80s, fell in love, got married and had a baby boy. With Will's daughter from a previous marriage, they were a happy family of four. But they both knew that number could eventually get bigger.

"I prepped him early on," Lisa, 35, smiles. She knew from the time she was 4 years old, she says, that she was bisexual, although she didn't have a name for it. She also knew she was polyamorous, which she didn't have a name for, either. But she knew when she grew up she wanted a husband—and a wife.

"I secretly in my heart of hearts saw myself in the future with [both].... Some little girls want a Cinderella story; that was my Cinderella story."

Although she never had a physical relationship with a woman before she got married, she knew it would be in her future, and she and Will talked about it now and again. "After 10 years I finally said: 'You know what? I want to experience that.'"



Laury Weiss has plenty of love to go around. He founded and facilitates Portland's Polyamory Circle.

Although Will, 44, didn't know exactly what to expect, he did have 10 years to get used to the idea and, he says, he was "comfortable enough in our relationship" to decide the time had come. "She could leave me and go out and date girls or she could stay married and see how this worked...I didn't really want to separate from my wife."

So Lisa began "just showing up at the Egyptian alone," she says. "I didn't know anybody...it was kinda scary."

And meeting women is hard when you're wearing a wedding ring. She wanted to be honest about her situation from the start, so she always told women right away she was married. "That turned a lot of girls off. Surprisingly, huh?" she laughs.

Then out of the blue Lisa found someone it didn't turn off. She and Kristen made eyes at each other six years ago at Embers, then started talking. "She immediately told me she was married...I thought it was kind of cool. Most people would probably kind of feel you out before they said any-

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