

# Relationship Anarchy as a Tool for Empowerment

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# What is Relationship Anarchy?

“Relationship Anarchy is a relationship style characterized most often by a rejection of rules, expectations and entitlement around personal relationships. Relationship Anarchists are reticent to label their relationships according to normative expression (boyfriend, girlfriend etc..) believing these labels to be inherently hierarchichal but, rather look at the content of the individual relationship allowing their fluidity to evolve naturally under the guiding principles of love, respect, freedom and trust. R.A. does not predefine sexual inclination, gender identity or relationship orientation” (1)

(1) Louisa Leontinades from [www.criticalpolyamorist.com](http://www.criticalpolyamorist.com)

MONOGAMY



POLYAMORY



RELATIONSHIP ANARCHY



# Love is Abundant and every relationship is unique

- Questions love as a limited resource, capacity to love more than one person does not diminish love felt for another
- R.A. does not rank/compare people & relationships. It cherishes the individual and your connection to them
- Each relationship is independent and between two autonomous individuals

# Love and Respect Instead of Entitlement

- Respecting others' independence and self-determination
- History does not make one entitled to command and control a partner to comply with what is normal in a relationship
- Exploring how to engage without overstepping boundaries and personal beliefs
- Allowing loved ones to choose paths that keep their integrity intact without causing a crisis
- Staying away from entitlement and demands is the only way to be sure you are in a relationship that is truly mutual
- Love is not more 'real' when people compromise for each other because it is what is expected



I've been realizing recently that "poly" doesn't describe me as well as "relationship anarchist". I don't want to merely take what I do in relationship to ONE person and do that with MORE people...

you're mine forever!

So are you!!

AND YOU!!!

What I care about now is relating authentically to EVERYONE in my life, and celebrating the fluidity of relationships instead of trying to force them to look a certain way or remain fixed.

Vajra and I just dropped the label of "partners" with each other, scrapping all our preconceived beliefs about partnership that weren't serving us, and making room to connect in all the ways we ACTUALLY care about together.



I had been so scared of losing our partnership. I had no idea it would actually bring us so much closer together!



# Finding your Core Set of Values

- How do you wish to be treated by others?
- What are your basic boundaries, expectations with all relationships?
- What kind of people do you want to spend your life with?
- How would you like your relationships to work?
- Don't make special rules and exceptions as a way to show people you love them "for real"
- **YOU** are responsible for knowing your own values and boundaries

# EXAMPLES OF CORE VALUES

Autonomy

Attractiveness

Balance

Brilliance

Compassion

Cooperation

Creativity

Decisiveness

Enthusiasm

Fairness

Family

Grace

Humility

Individuality

Kindness

Learning

Making a difference

Pleasure

Risk Taking

Self-Control

Stability

Thoughtfulness

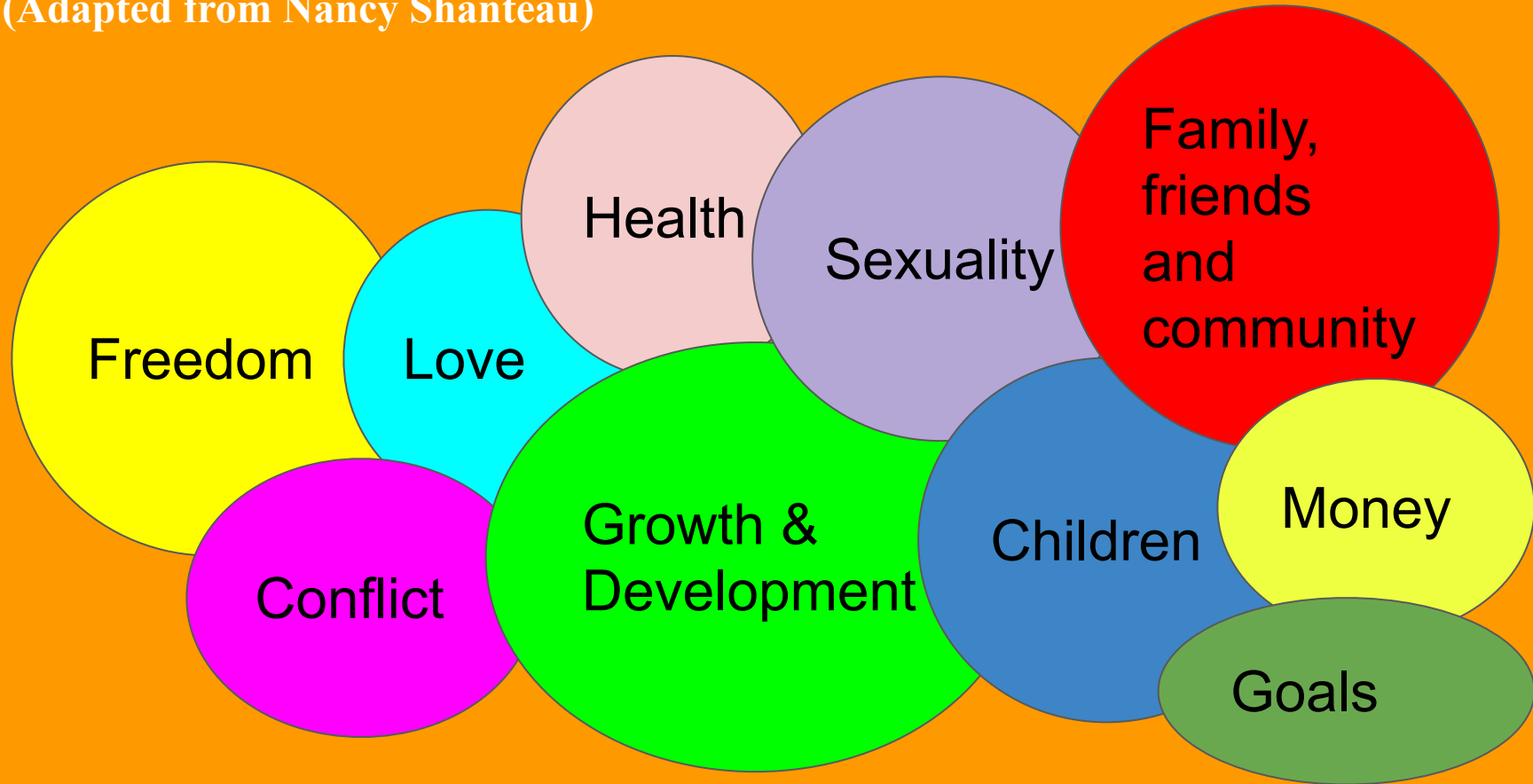
Usefulness

Wealth



# Relationship Vision Document:

(Adapted from Nancy Shanteau)



# Heterosexism is Rampant, Don't let Fear Lead You

- Remember there is a powerful, normative system in play that dictates what real love is and how people should live
- Many will question you and the validity of your relationships when you don't follow these norms
- Work with the people you love to find escapes/ tricks to counter the worst of problematic norms
- Don't let fear drive your relationships

# **Build for the Lovely Unexpected**



- **Being free to be spontaneous--to express oneself without fear of punishments or a sense of burdened “shoulds”**
- **Organize based on a wish to meet and explore each other--not on duties, demands and disappointment when they are not met**

# **Fake It 'Til You Make It**

- **It can be difficult to navigate all the norm breaking/unlearning/deconstructing involved in choosing relationships that don't map the norm**
- **When feeling strong and inspired, think about how you want to see yourself act. Transform this into simple guidelines and stick to them when things get tough**
- **Talk and seek support from others who challenge norms and never reproach yourself when the norm pressure gets you into behaviour you did not wish for**

# TRUST IS BETTER

- **Choosing to assume your partner does not wish you harm leads you down a much more positive path**
- **Sometimes people have so much going on for themselves that theres just no energy left to care for others and so we must learn to self-soothe and support ourselves**
- **Create the type of relationship where withdrawing is accepted and quickly forgiven, give people chances to talk, explain, see you and be responsible in the relationship**

# **Change Through Communication**

- **If you want to deviate from the norm---you need to communicate**
- **Communication and joint action is the only way to break away**
- **Radical relationships must have conversation and communication at heart---NOT as a state of emergency only brought out to solve problems. COMMUNICATE IN A CONTEXT OF TRUST.**
- **Ask each other stuff, be curious, be explicit!**



# **CUSTOMIZE YOUR COMMITMENTS**

- **Endeavors such as building a life together, raising children, owning a house, growing together through thick and thin requires lots of trust and commitment**
- **Relationship Anarchy is not about not committing to nothing-- its about designing your own commitments with the people around you--freeing them from norms dictating that certain types of commitments are a requirement for love to be real OR that certain commitments have to be driven by certain feelings**
- **Start from scratch and be explicit about what kind of commitments you want to make with other people.**



# Relationship Smorgasbord

Adapted from

Romantic

Sexual

Physical

Caregiver

Co-Caregiver

Life  
Partner

Domestic

Social  
Partners

Financial

Emotional  
Support

Spiritual

Legal

Kink

Emotional  
Intimacy

# SUMMARY:



- Being in relationship by choice not by obligation, sustains growth and development, support, 'aliveness', self-confidence
- Finding ways to relate based on individual core values allows for more authentic connections
- Critically thinking about how we want our relationships to look like rather than blindly abiding, helps us to have more thriving relationships and aids our own personal evolution
- Making conscious relationship choices for ourselves work toward dismantling the patriarchy, capitalism and colonialism; inadvertently working toward social transformation

# References:

- <http://www.relationship-anarchy.com/about>
- <http://www.criticalpolyamorist.com>
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- <https://www.phoenyxenterprising.com/images/RAs3.jpg>
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- [\*\*http://www.nancyshanteau.com\*\*](http://www.nancyshanteau.com)