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a month and eventually met up, saw a movie and found they enjoyed each other's company. Soon thereafter, Jim and Chris were seeing each other.

It wasn't long until an unplanned series of interpersonal conflicts, romantic altercations and sexual trysts culminated in a late-night, after-party fling between Thomas, Jim and Chris. As the months rolled by, Chris found himself torn between the separated Jim and Thomas, and, in return, they found that they both had feelings for Chris.

By the end of July, Chris was spending so much time with Thomas and Jim the three



Chris Morgan, 22, a former Stanley Community College student studying business, works for a telecommunications company in Charlotte.

were basically sharing a bedroom at Thomas' house. But the drama resulting from not knowing who was dating whom, along with the divisions it caused between high school sweethearts Jim and Thomas, was too much to bear.

Their next leap into the uncharted waters of multi-partner love was like a revelation.

"A few months went by and we were all three doing everything together and we were like, damn, maybe this could work out," Chris recounts, as though there had literally been a light bulb flipped on over each of their heads. "We all three had feelings for each other."

Building a relationship

Managing any sort of romantic, long-term relationship can be difficult. The constant and daily push-and-pull of life and love — working, sleeping, eating, cleaning... all the seemingly mundane tasks of everyday life — take on a new meaning when two are involved. Couples across

the country spend exorbitant amounts of money each year on family, marriage and sex counseling. Bringing three separate lives, personalities, wants and needs into accord might be uncommon, but the issues really aren't all that different than those faced by couples.

"Just like when you have a regular relationship with two people, you have drama," Chris notes. "If you have three people, it is triple the drama."

Although there are three involved, instead of two, Thomas says they have to navigate the same issues all other couples and committed partners have. The three's dominant and outgoing personalities lend family life an extra dose of disagreement.

"We're all three strong personalities. We all try being the 'HBIC,' which stands for the 'head bitch in charge,'" Jim humors.

After their decision to go all in, Jim, Thomas and Chris very quickly set down one simple ground rule.

"There was no going outside of the relationship," Chris says. "To where this is the most untraditional relationship you can ever imagine, I'm still traditional. Don't cheat on me."

Trust and respect, the couple's other ground rules, are designed to keep the relationship equitable and fair for all involved. They say jealousy and issues of fairness were among the hardest emotional — and sometimes logistical — obstacles to overcome when they began their relationship. Feeling like you were becoming the "third wheel" wasn't a sentiment any of them relished then or now.



Jeremy Eady, 22, attends UNC-Charlotte and is studying sociology and math.

see Polyamorous on 16

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