

Open Your MIND Open Your RELATIONSHIP

by Curtis Main

In the words of Sophia Patrillo: "Picture this: Chapel Hill, 2006. The most beautiful person passes you and gives you a simple look that you could hold on to and fantasize about forever. Not the standard kind of beauty - but that heart-stealing phenomenal type of person that you have been wanting for as long as you remember. You are a couple, the best in your eyes, and your partner is so incredible to you that you honestly ponder how you could be so lucky."

"Now, it also warms your heart to share this joy you have together with your friends and family. You share this energy, this love, between the two of you, with other people. They feel the magic and are happy as well. Your friends adore your partner and you all spend time together. Your family (the good side) enjoys the thought of having your partner visit with you."

Please, can you tell me then, where exactly this sharing is supposed to stop? Is your partner allowed to enjoy the company of others at a club? The movies? At dinner? Can they give an intimate hug to a dear friend and not get the jealous eye from you? When you ask a friend to admit how striking and attractive your partner is, and you obviously want the answer to be "yes," will you then get mad if they fantasize about your partner?

Even further, once you meet that perfect person for you, will you not ever find another person absolutely stunning, or at least intriguing? Will all your sexual energy be just with your one partner?

Carlos and I have been together for three and a half years, and of those three we spent the first two worrying about jealousy, distrust, and cheating. One night at 3 a.m., after a three hour-long fight over the same old topic of cheating, we both decided to try an open sexual relationship. After all, if we are allowed to indulge in others and it is acceptable and expected by us both, what would we have to worry about? We already have relationships with many others in so many ways, so what difference does it make to open the sexual part of our relationship as well?

You might be thinking, "Well, that might work for you two, but never for me." Yet I said the same thing our first two years together. I wanted Carlos all to myself, in so many ways, and especially sexually. The thought of others pleasing him, touching him, taking "my" time with him away - made me crazily jealous. But after two years of only getting closer

to Carlos, it took little effort to realize that he found other people sexually attractive and exciting, and if we really were a healthy couple, why would I have to worry about him being with other people? If we are meant to be, Carlos will always come back to me in the end. If the sex with person X was good, ours is better. If Carlos truly craves another person more than me, is it better for him to always wonder what could have been, or better for him to know that I am still the love of his life?

In all relationships, no matter how hard you try, you are sharing your partner(s) with other people. They have other people in their life in which they devote some fraction of their focus. For every relationship, the "rules" differ as to how much sharing is involved.

And I still get jealous, or worried, but the idea of Carlos's satisfaction is most important and my worries ultimately petty. When his face comes alive with excitement over some sexual excursion he had, he will tell me with a big grin, worrying less about a jealous partner and thinking more about sharing the excitement with his best friend, me.

In fact, I am Carlos's second serious relationship. Let us just say that in high school I had plenty of sexual adventures, so my curiosities are smaller than Carlos's. Yet does he not also deserve the chance to explore his sexuality with other people? Should he just be stuck with me, forever, never knowing what other people, well, carry? What other "tricks" are out there?

Now just imagine, again, that your perfect partner, whom you trust and love to see happy, comes skipping home to tell you, their best friend, a little story. They "got some ass," and instead of lying to you about their desires and experiences for years or even a lifetime, with a red face you hear every juicy and dirty detail, right down to the part where they say, "Well, I really prefer the way you do it; and your smell just puts me in a trance."

I urge, but more so challenge, anyone in a relationship to actually take that risk. Or are you too afraid? If your relationship is so stable and secure, what do you have to worry about? And if you are satisfied enough with one another, then take the advice that Alix Olsen gave to my friends Jes and Ali: "Oh, you two have been together for how long? Four years? And you won't share? Now that is just selfish."