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Good morning and happy Sunday, I hope that you're having a beautiful day. Today by request, we're going to be talking about how we add distance to a relationship without necessarily breaking up.

We usually take cues from, how is the relationship actually going? Not? How do we wish it could go or think someday in the future after some amount of vague work? It could be like this. It's like, Yeah, we could future-trip about what it would be like if all these other circumstances were different. But I'm dating you now. I'm not dating the potential of you. Or I'm knowing you now I'm not knowing who you used to be when you demonstrate a different behavior, right? I'm, I'm with you today. What can I do with you today, it's always up to you how long you want to stick around in unacceptable circumstances, waiting for a change. That is not something that anyone can tell you when you're done waiting. But pointedly, that does become harder, the longer we stay, convincing ourselves to be in a dynamic that isn't working for us, right? The longer that I tried to convince myself No, no, just a little longer, just a little longer, there'll be better, there'll be better, then I'll wake up two years later, wondering how I lost touch with my gut instinct, I think it's really important to stay in touch with those real time experiences, and not talk ourselves out of listening to our own bodies, because it can be all too easy to get disconnected and lose track of ourselves.

So how do we go about that mindfully, especially if we do want to keep them in our life, you know, there's always pulling the ripcord option of completely ending the relationship going no contact, you know, but that is usually the only option we're given in monogamous culture, we're usually told you're either with somebody or you cut off contact with them. And a lot of us have flexibility around that a lot of us are still friends with people we used to date. And we sort of found restructuring on our own. But within non monogamy, it could be that you still are romantically or sexually intertwined with somebody that you still are, you know, interdependent financially, or have a business or are child rearing. And you just need to remove it almost surgically, some aspects of what we're doing that can require a little bit more intentionality, and explicit negotiation. So let's talk about it.

The nature of the why will often dictate the what of the distance and potentially the pacing, has it been a slow pattern of them falling short of small commitments, you know, and that it slowly eroded our ability to feel like we can totally rely on them. So we'd rather not rely on them as much, is that what's motivating it? Or is there a massive instant rupture of trust overnight, and you just need instant distance before

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you can even wrap your head around figuring out how they will be in your life in some capacity, right? why we want this will often be a starting point for what we do about it.

Now, again, the goal here is to keep this person in our life, this is not a video about a breakup, it is a video about a restructuring. And a lot of times a person doesn't really want the same kind of thing we want, right? And this is the negotiation aspect of it, it can feel uncomfortable, it can be hard to ask, especially if we know they're hurting, or they want to convince us that it's not necessary, or they want to prove that they're doing something, right. So I just want to put words to how difficult this can be in practice. in theory, oh, great, we want less of a thing. So let's do less of the thing. But in practice, there's so much hurt feelings, so much fear, there's so much mismatch desire, sometimes, you know, and that can make this a really delicate thing to walk through.

So what I'll be doing is going through some ways that I've gone into renegotiation, especially with the removal of some elements in my life, and I'll share some examples of that just to show healthy returns to practice. And maybe that will be helpful if you are going through something similar.

So there's always the option to slow the frequency of what we're doing. You know, I spoke in a previous video about changing the nature of my non reciprocated friendships. And I had one that was sort of a breakup of sorts, but we aren't out of each other's life, you know, and it was a friend that, you know, proved over the course of a couple of years that I just can't rely on her how I used to because her priorities have changed with her new business. Now she has two babies and I don't demonize that priorities can change. I did feel hurt that we didn't talk about it. We kept planning things and then she kept canceling, she kept over committing rather than just ripping the band aid off and saying, I just don't have the time. I just don't have the energy. it hurt more that she tried to deny her availability, because then she wound up still being unavailable but setting me up to think she would be and whether that is a choice or that is by nature of circumstance, the fact of the matter remains, she's unavailable. So I need to stop needing those things I need to stop, reaching out for those things in those ways. And so we're changing the frequency to something that's a lot more spontaneous and a lot less consistent. Removal of regularity was a relief to both of us, right, she maybe didn't know to ask for it or didn't think that it was causing her stress. But when I stopped wanting to hang out with consistency, it appeared to give her relief, right, and she lit up and she was, you know, laughing more and stuff. And it gave me relief of, I don't want to keep making dates, or having expectations, having needs from somebody who is not only not available for them, but even my request, my taking up space is causing her stress, I don't want

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that, you know, that feels bad for me, I don't want somebody to treat my needs as an inconvenience. Or as a, you know, if I make myself small enough, and easily packaged in a palatable way, then maybe I'll have my needs met, I can't for myself, you know, do those head games. And I have found that I had been trying to do that of just, let me keep it light, or let me ask for help, but not in an intense way. And it's like, this could mean we need to change what we're doing here.

So we talked about slowing frequency, changing the pacing, let's talk about removing types of conversations, specifically, new boundaries around disclosure, new definitions of what is too much information, you know, and that can be for a number of reasons. Again, it doesn't have to be that anybody has done anything wrong. I have requested to not hear details anymore about my partner's kink lives with other people stuff that I used to be really interested in and even would participate in. And during a period of me working on my own sexual trauma history, I'm in a different headspace than I used to be. So can you not share those things anymore, right. And that is a pretty straightforward request based off of changing circumstances are changing emotions.

Sometimes something within the dynamic or within the polycule is, you know, asking for such a thing. if I'm kind of over how my metamour is treating my partner, and I don't really want to hear about it for the millionth time of a conflict they're having, I might say, I love you, I love what we're doing. I have nothing more to give you around feedback of this metaphor. And I think it might turn into a counterproductive thing where I start resenting them, disliking them, or even resenting you for getting stuck in something like I need you to bring that to somebody else, can we remove my emotional support around this relationship? Can we remove that, at least for now, you know, and that doesn't have to be an insulting thing. I think the setting of these boundaries is a loving thing. It is saying I want to keep you in my life, I want to keep this relationship happy and sustained. And my asking to remove this or that is a way to do that. When I don't do that. I blow up eventually. And I don't want to implode, either. Sometimes, suppressing it means, I start not being able to sleep or having trouble eating or you know, it comes out somewhere. So even though it can be uncomfortable to initiate these conversations, I always think it's the gentler and more straightforward path.

And when we ask for those bounds, and they are honored, and they are maintained, it can feel really loving. That's actually that brings me closer to that person. They've seen me they've heard me and they're down to make an adjustment in order to help me continue feeling safe or continue feeling relaxed in their presence. That's beautiful. And I'm grateful for that.

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So we've discussed pacing, we've discussed conversation topics, let's talk about types of interactions that we don't want to do anymore. Like, oh, we're friends, and we're going into business together. Oh, actually, maybe we're not good at going into business together. Let's just go back to being friends. Oh, we're romantic and sexual. Let's raise a child together. Oh, we're good at the child thing. Let's remove the romantic and sexual though because that seems to be causing problems, you know. So there's just so many examples in all sorts of relationship structures where this is pretty normalized. It's somewhat common to remove or add or remove again, sex from a relationship that usually doesn't exist in a vacuum. What do we not do together anymore? What would be confusing? What would push our own internal limits? Should we not be getting drunk alone together at night? So for example, should we actually only have group Hangouts for a while until this lack of sex feels more normal, especially if we don't really want to do it all the time, but we think it's best or we know we need it or one of us is really vulnerable, really needs it and the other person is going to struggle to, you know, rein it in and try to let go of that desire. Can we set up circumstances structurally, what are we literally doing together, that can make what we're trying to change a little bit easier.

So that might be a good segue into removing vulnerability. You know, maybe for some people, this goes hand in hand with removing sexuality. But that's not the only kind of vulnerability that we might feel is compromised. Of course, there could be emotional vulnerability, if somebody has demonstrated, they can't really emotionally support you either out of lack of ability, or they get reactive, and now you have to take care of them when you need help, or their zoning out, and they're being selfish and, can't really be present with you and you're needing something. If being vulnerable with them emotionally and needing support from them emotionally is causing more stress or more struggle, or creating new conflict, then maybe that's not stuff you bring to them anymore.

But beyond that, there can be a myriad of ways that we remove intimacy or emotional closeness, right. For example, there was somebody that I was professionally engaged with. This person was a director of a documentary of which I was the producer. And so we were working long hours into the night, you know, often, a lot of creative collaboration, a lot of intellectual problem solving with money and fundraising and stuff. And a lot of time spent together. When they're in town, they come and they stay on my sofa, which is right next to my bed, you know, that sort of intimacy, we are professional colleagues, we absolutely would call each other friends. And we haven't gone into something that can be pointed to as romantic or sexual, right. So it's not outwardly presenting as consistently having those traits, but it's gray. And I think that that can be really beautiful, and that it's okay to have an

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undefined lack of label with a lot of fluidity around how you relate to somebody. And this person was monogamous, and they got close with somebody, it started to become clear that the way we had closeness was starting to make their girlfriend uncomfortable. And so okay, we can remove that I don't want to cause harm. I don't want with you, but you clearly want with somebody, right? And it might be sad, I might miss those long nights, or I might miss the ability for you to just come over and for us to have uninterrupted or unrestricted fluidity, but all that to say, we kind of leveled with each other. Like, this has been such a beautiful experience. And I don't - I think I need to stay at an Airbnb next time I'm in town. and I said, totally makes sense. I don't want her to feel uncomfortable, you know, that can be the extent of a we are now removing some vulnerability. We are now also in removing vulnerability, naming what kinds of interaction we don't have any more right? These all flow together.

That can be transitioned with ease. As much as it could be transitioned with a firm, hard line, you cannot tell me these things. It all depends on the stakes, how intense is the negative response is the reactionary response to what we're doing. Maybe that's the intensity with which it needs to be stepped away from right and the speed with which it needs to be removed. Now, sometimes change is forced upon us, sometimes rapid changes necessary in response to a crisis. And if that's not needed, if that feels disproportionate, could we do something a bit gentler? Could we trial and error? I don't know if this will feel right for me to sleep on yourself. Let me talk to her, you know, she thinks it's fine all but now that I'm sleeping on your sofa, I feel like it's maybe not fine anymore. You know, there can be this - My best idea of how we keep doing it as this. But in practice, I'm realizing it should be that. You know, it's not always one single conversation either. It could be that you continue to collaborate as you try things out.

Probably the most strict one that comes to mind is the near cut off. So the near cut off is usually the result of trying everything else. And either you can't cut that person out or you don't want to totally you're not totally ready to go the extreme route of never talking to them again, you'd like to at least try. Can we know each other in some context? I'll give a perfect example of the woman who raised me. I'm starting to not use mother anymore. I'm trying to see how that feels. But that's a side note. I tried first slowing the roll with which I reached out to her, maybe it'll just be for now on holidays. And then I tried chilling out on not sharing as much, maybe we just don't talk about my relationships if she's gonna keep calling me a whore, you know, or I don't talk about my work that I'm doing with polyamory. If she's going to tell me I'm immoral, you know, those conversations don't go well.

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So, okay, now I'm limiting when and how often I talked to her and what we talked about. And then it became clear, when I brought home a partner, when it was a holiday, that she would just barge into the room, we could have been undressing, we could have been having sex, she had no boundaries. And I think that's always been true throughout my life, but I was like, I don't know that I can stay at her home anymore. when I visit, I think I need to get my own space, because she continues, I even tried locking the door, and she started slamming on it. She's kind of an abusive person, a very volatile person. And so, Oh, apparently, I need to remove these kinds of interactions, right. And, it was like going through every step of it. Until I finally started removing vulnerability altogether, I now only engage with her and logistical things. I now only say, okay, it's my brother's safe, I need to send this to you. What is your address, just detached, emotionally pulled in Word, administrative things. Honestly, that relationship is how I started structuring this video, because I was trying all of these different things, and discovering oh, I need to get to a near cut off with her. But then in reflection, I realized, Oh, those are things that I've, all done on some level and other relationships, too. Maybe there's something here, right. And so that's kind of the genesis of this whole video.

And so it's been a series of mindful pulling away. And every time she did not want to do that, we can absolutely renegotiate and change the level of proximity we have to somebody, even if they're protesting, even if they are not a fan, they do not want that. That doesn't matter. We get to choose what we participate in. That's the core of creating boundaries, this is what I'll participate in. This is how I'm willing to be treated, you know. And so if there is pushback on that, maybe those boundaries are fucking firmer, and maybe we have more infrastructure in place to keep them there, you know, but if we set a boundary and someone's like, yeah, that makes sense, then there could maybe be a little bit more ease, there could be more fluidity, maybe we might be open to renegotiating those boundaries, at some point, you know, so how they receive our boundary will say a lot.

When we step back from somebody, a lot of times we want it to be temporary, or that could even be the goal. And then you realize, no, actually, I'm liking how this is or this feels right after all. And then there needs to be another negotiation about, I don't think that should be temporary. And you know, there could be a second wave of grief about that, well, I thought this distance was in service of us getting back together at some point, it's not guaranteed, because we can't predict what we're going to want, we can't predict what we're going to discover. When we remove something or when we add something we use our track records, we use what we know about ourselves and our trauma responses to make an educated guess. But then we discover in practice, if it's working or not.

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And so I try to avoid making promises of this will only be for a short time until this when the goal itself could be discovering how I feel with a little bit of distance. But that is not always so clean. You know, we can't just snap into a different dynamic overnight, there will be those aches, there will be that pull, sometimes we have to go through a period of grief, a lot of breathing room that might be needed, or processing of emotions before we're ready. You know, and that is something that we just listened to our bodies we talked to our support about.

I have not been able to do a lot of this without help. And that's important to note. Without help, it is too much for us sometimes to change what we're doing with a person from hooking up with someone who's emotionally unavailable and then still wanting to text them a lot, all the way to wanting to get into a fight with my mother. It is so tough to rewire those responses, we need support, right? I need to show my mother's text to people and say can you please give me your opinion. I need help calming down. I need help really stepping outside of this. I've had to say I need to walk away from this person because I know they are trouble for me and I am going to text them the minute that I can write. It is okay for us to rely on community in order to break cycles we want to break in order to step out of patterns that are causing harm to us or to other people. And with practice then it becomes a bit easier to do it on our own without so much hands on support.

It's always so tough to speak in generalities, take what resonates and discard what doesn't. I am also trying to be accessible to as many different types of relationships as possible from an incredibly well adjusted and hyper communicative one all the way to an incredibly abusive and dysfunctional one. As always, you listen to your body, you listen to your own reactions, you notice what you are experiencing, and have that be a primary guiding principle in the decisions that you make. Let's not always lead cerebrally, let's also approach with a question mark and an openness to physical experience in this situation. That's it for me today. I would love to know your thoughts. I'd love to know if you have anything to add. They hope that you have a beautiful day. Let me know what else you wanna talk about.

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