

E3 - Queer Dating Coach Ariella Serur: Dating as a Newly Queer Person and New Relationship Energy

Ariella [00:00:00] I remember like the first time I was hooking up with people outside of my relationship, I was like, Oh, I like, I feel like I'm doing something wrong. Yeah, but I'm not. I'm just I'm just doing the thing that my partner and I had said was, OK. There was a bit of a learning curve there to to be like, Oh, right, like, no, you know, this is within the confines of what we what we're allowed to do. And I just need to process this with myself of like, OK, like, this is OK, this is safe. What...What is feeling uncomfortable here?

Fernanda [00:00:41] Hi, everyone, welcome to Polycurious. We are so excited to be chatting today with queer dating coach Ariella Serur. Ariella is a certified life coach. She's also currently receiving a graduate advanced certificate in sexuality, women and gender with a concentration in LGBTQ issues from Columbia University. In her practice, she works with queer people navigating the dating world, so dating becomes an enjoyable process and part of their personal growth journey. We wanted to have Ariella on the show because a lot of non-monogamous people also come out to discover their queerness, and they might not really know how to go about it when dating, but also because Ariella's work is focused on understanding what it is that you want from dating and, more importantly, how to communicating, which is something that everyone can benefit from. In this conversation, Mariah named Chad about Ariel's own queerness and non-monogamous journey. We talk about how to deal with feelings of infatuation, especially when you have a primary partner. She gives tips around what to do when you're not 100 percent sure that you are queer, but also you don't want to be playing around with people. We also get into a really interesting conversation about how to make the first move and also how you might try to get non verbal consent from your date when you are really sure if they're into you so much to talk about. So let's just get to it. Here's our conversation with queer dating coach, Ariella Serur.

Fernanda [00:02:18] Hi Ariella, We are so excited to have you. I've been listening to a bunch of other interviews that you've done on podcasts, and I have so many questions. I have so many things to say. And I also just want to learn more about you because I feel that as much as there's information out there about your work, there's not that much information, at least, that I could find about, you know, how you came to become a queer dating coach, and that's obviously like informed by your own journey. And I know that at least at the time you recorded a previous podcast, you were non-monogamous, and I'm sure that it was also another journey.

Ariella [00:02:56]. Totally.

Fernanda [00:02: 57]. So why don't we start like from the very basics? Where are you from? Like, where do you grow up? What kind of family did you have? Because I've also heard comments about your mom that actually like reminded me of my mom.

Ariella [00:03:09]: Uh-huh.

Fernanda [00:03:10] Like her being like, proud of your dating life and things like that, you know? Sounds. It sounds like a progressive mom, but I have no idea. I'm just making assumptions.

Ariella [00:03:18] So funny.

Fernanda [00:03:20]: So you going to like, let us know more about

Ariella [00:03:21] Like, yeah, what I say about my mom? Umm, yeah, sure. So first, I'm really happy to be here. Thanks for having me. So I'm originally from Long Island and my folks live in the city. I live in the city, so I feel very much like I identify as a New York City person. Hopefully, Brooklyn person soon. I...my background is in acting in theater.

Mariah: Oh my god. Me too.

Ariella: That's fun. Yeah. So that's kind of what I did my whole life. It's also what I still do now to an extent, and I'm also composing my first musical in this moment.

Mariah: Woah, awesome.

Ariella: Yes, a wild time. Um, so that's kind of like my personal life. I am non-monogamous, monogamous, still. I am proudly queer. I have an awesome family. I can tell you more details about any of those things. Is there somewhere that you want to dive into first?

Fernanda [00:04:20] Yeah. Why don't we start with your queerness? Is that something that you knew early on or how did that process of understanding yourself better start? Yeah.

Mariah [00:04:30] Yeah, and with that too, I guess I'm curious kind of which one as far as like non-monogamy goes and queerness, which one you kind of came out with first and like what that transition was like, too.

Ariella [00:04:43] Totally. Queerness definitely proceeded non-monogamy. So I did not consider the fact that I could be queer. When I was growing up, I was surrounded by a lot of gay cis men in the theater, as one is, but I had no alternative representation of queerness. So, I remember the first time I heard the word "lesbian" on TV when I was like eight years old, which I have a terrible memory of my childhood. So the fact that I even remember the first time I heard the word lesbian, I was like, How did I? Why is that sticking out to me? Now I know, but I remember asking my parents about it at the time when I was really young and they were kind of like, Yeah, this is what it means. Is that like, is that how you feel? And at the time, I was like, No, but so that's kind of when I heard about the other options of queerness besides being a gay man. But it wasn't until college that I really started to explore my sexuality, and by college, I mean like my senior year of college. So I was like very straight laced, very tightly wound, very type A personality, until senior year. And basically, even though like in high school, I would have a lot of boyfriends and one of them was like, I heard a song today that reminded me of you. And I was like, Oh, what was the song? And he was like, I kissed a girl by Katy Perry, and I was like, Oh, is that? Is that because you like kissing me? And he was like, No, I think it's because you'd like kissing girls. It was like completely oblivious to the end. I was like, Oh, that's an interesting thing to say. So it wasn't until my senior year of college where a freshman came in and they were like, really out and proud as bi and up until that point, I'd obviously still been surrounded by a lot of gay men. But there wasn't a lot of queer folks other than cis gay men in the theater program I was in. So basically, this freshman came in when I was a senior and they, like, rocked my world and I was like, I guess I need to explore this. So, I made a series of really bad decisions and was really still closeted. And just like having like just having sex with queer people for a really long time, but not identifying as queer and just like going down on my friends in the bathroom at parties and like still being like, I'm straight, this is my favorite hobby and I'm straight. So that took a long time for me to actually come out, come out as a queer person. I just really thought that I just loved this activity and I thought everybody else loved it too. And umm, no, I'm just really gay is what that means. So, I didn't actually, I slept queer people for years and would kind of date, but not really take anybody seriously. And then I came out officially when I when I was in my first queer relationship, which was in 2017.

Mariah [00:07:50] Wow. So I'm just curious about that, I guess it's more, you know, like you said, you were really into it as an activity or something that you knew that you liked. But what was the block from making you think that this was potentially like a romantic interest as well? Was it just purely sexual at the time?

Ariella [00:08:11] I think that part of it is that, and this is an experience I've seen with clients, with friends, sometimes when we don't feel romantic for a person or sexual for a person, we discount an entire gender or an entire group of people.

Mariah: Absolutely.

Ariella: So, I think that that's what was happening for me. I mean, a combination of things. In retrospect, I can totally see that I had feelings for that person, that freshman that had come into school. But I think that was it enough feelings that it feel like the feelings I had had previously. I'm not sure, and I was probably also wrestling with a lot of internalized homophobia and a lack of

role models in queer spaces that I didn't know kind of where to fit or how to move forward with that information. So I think it was like a few different kind of Venn diagram type circles pushing in on me, making me think that I'm just straight with like a dedicated hobby of hooking up with queer people. So basically, what happened was this freshman, we had like a years long saga. Like many years. There was one night in 2016 where we hooked up and they basically like grabbed me by the shoulders, and was just like, "What are you doing? Like, you need to be dating queer people like, why are you not dating queer people?" And I was just like, Oh God, you're right, I probably should. Like, I should be giving this a real shot and not like, I should just be like, like, I want to try this and see if this feels right to me. So, basically, I was I went to Philly to do a show. I was hired as an actor and I knew I was going to be there for a couple of months. So I was like, I will not date non queer folks. I will not date cis men during this time here. And let me just see how this is feeling for me. And you felt great. And yeah, so so then I identified as queer for a while and would date all certain types of like all types of folks. And now I'm pretty firmly gay.

Mariah [00:10:21] That's wonderful. I love that you kind of made that challenge for yourself, too, because I think that's something that a lot of us don't do. Often enough is kind of cut out what is comfortable, you know, to try something full on.

Ariella: Totally.

Mariah: And I think that's really great that you did that.

Ariella [00:10:38] And I think that comes up a lot with clients and a lot of bi clients, where like, they'll say, I'm getting so many more matches with men or I'm getting so many more messages with men, and I really want to be getting messages from queer people. And I'm like, then only allow the messages from the queer people like, stop swiping right on men or take men out of the out of the deck for a bit and just see how that feels for you. Because if you're weeding through a bunch of people to get to a queer person every now and then, then you're not really allowing the best filter for yourself if you're only going to the queer people inside this anyway.

Fernanda [00:11:13] Can you tell us a bit more about your work and how you work with clients in that way?

Ariella [00:11:18] Yeah, totally. I think it's so important for people to investigate what is it they want from dating? What is it that they think they want from a relationship? Why do you think that relationship is going to give you the things that you think you want your life? Were are all these pieces interconnected, how can we feel the way that we want to feel outside of relationships that we think we're going to feel in the relationship? How can we feel the way we want to feel outside of dating that we think dating is going to bring to us? How can dating itself bring the things to us besides finding a person that we want to date, in the process of dating? So, it's it's a lot of, that's kind of the beginning stages of it. And then we get into more like logistics. So basically, I teach queer people or anybody under the LGBTQIA+ umbrella how to date or how to date better. So if you've dated before and you're just like, this just isn't working for me, I don't, I'm not enjoying it. This is hard. I feel like I'm totally alone in my problems with dating, then I want to teach you how to date better. If you've never dated before or you're new to queerness or new to dating in a different way, or you're new to non-monogamy, then I want to help you date, period. And a lot of this is through my Instagram and free resources that I give out, but also through a six week bootcamp that I run called Date Better Bootcamp, where it has a few different components, like 35 video modules where I teach people how to date, and then live group coaching guest workshops and online community platform and a whole bunch of stuff that kind of goes into giving us a bit of a map. I'm like helping you create your map based on what works for you and based on your personality, your values, your preferences. So that's kind of the big picture of what it is that I do.

Fernanda [00:12:56] And what are some of the challenges that you encountered, you know, dating as a newly queer person and some of the challenges that you know, you also might see in your practice?

Ariella [00:13:08] Yeah. I mean, there is a lot. For me personally, I think something that I found really difficult was like, how do I navigate being new to a thing? Still understanding my own level of desire in it while also treating someone else like as well as I can be knowing that I'm on kind of a journey with this so that's something that comes up. But a lot of times it's people not knowing where to start, not knowing how to talk about what they need, what they're looking for, or not knowing what it is that they need or what they're looking for. I think the problem is that we've been fed one particular image of what love and relationships look like predominantly through media. And though that's shifting now, obviously with the rise of content creators as legitimate media that we're taking in. I think it is still obviously a huge lack of representation of how do I actually do this thing? And a lot of dating coaches and people out there creating content around dating, don't have content that is applicable to queer folks or applicable to non-monogamous folks or trans folks. So it's there's just still a big gap. So I think that the gap in the not knowing and sometimes the lack of community surrounding those topics is probably what's most challenging for folks these days.

Mariah [00:14:31] Yeah, I think that we find that a lot in just the non-monogamous world as well, you know, just being able to kind of step in and know, how do I meet people and how do I approach people and I am in this exploratory stage right now. I don't even know what's right for me or what I should label myself. So I really see a lot of parallels there as well.

Ariella [00:14:52] For sure, for sure. I think one of the biggest things with non-monogamy and polyamory is the fact that there are so many unique challenges that face people in these relationship orientations that to try and go at it alone with no resources and no community is oftentimes disastrous for someone's mental health because there are frameworks out there and there are ways that you can be supported. And I think that it is so important, particularly with these folks, myself included, to have resources, have community, have books that podcasts have other people that have been like, here this like try this. You don't have to be like making this up from square one in your living room, just with your partner, like there is information out there. And I think it's really helpful to turn to resources like that and resources like this.

Mariah[00:15:43] Yeah.

Fernanda [00:15:44] Yeah, for sure. And what were some of the challenges that you encountered being non-monogamous? First of all, how did that come up? Was your first relationship non-monogamous or who, who brought it up? How do you like think of the idea?

Ariella [00:15:56] Yeah, uh, it was a little bit more organic in the sense that I didn't know what it was. I just knew that I wanted it. So I, when I was a senior in college, I had asked a boyfriend at the time to be open, when I was when I was a senior in high school, sorry. So when I was senior in high school, I asked a boyfriend to be open when I was senior in college. I also asked another partner to be open. Then when I was in Philly with this partner, I had asked them to be open. So I kept like asking for this thing of like, I want to be able to maintain some kind of openness to connect with people in the way that I want to, with less limitations or with not abiding by the traditional expectations or limitations and putting that in quotes for the people that aren't looking at me right now. So I knew that there was something about this structure that wasn't working for me, but I didn't know. I didn't know what it was called. I didn't know what. I didn't know how to handle that responsibly. So basically, in 2017, in September, there was a polyamory one on one symposium hosted by Curious Fox. I'm not sure if you're familiar with that.

Polycurious [00:17:04] Mm hmm. Yeah.

Ariella [00:17:05] OK. I'm obsessed with Curious Foxes on their podcast as well. I just think that they were an organization I was really involved with pre-pandemic and then volunteering for events got tricky. But so they had a polyamory symposium, 101. It was a full day of speakers about polyamory. So it was literally just like a crash course in the thing. And I took a friend who I had kind of dated a bit, and I remember her being like, this seems like it's for you. And I was like, I fucking know it does, doesn't it?

Fernanda [00:17:42] So it's sorry to interrupt. But what made you think that it was for you? I mean, you mentioned you wanted like more open, but what characteristics of your personality or desires made you think that? Yeah.

Ariella [00:17:53] Basically, it was everybody who runs through stocks, one of the two folks that runs through stocks. They had talked about this concept called relationship by design, and there are books about it actually talks a lot about it. What I remember Effie saying was if you had if you were going to get a new apartment with someone and your partner really love to cook and you really love to play music, when you're looking for an apartment together, you're going to make sure that the kitchen is really nice for your partner and that you're going to have a place like hang up your guitars and put your keyboard and whatever. And that creating relationships should be as specific, as intentional, and as creative as creating a home. So that concept felt mind blowing because in the past I have tried to abide by the construct of what I thought relationship should be, in quotes, and knew that it wasn't working because I would ask for these extra things that partners would say yes or no to, to varying degrees of comfort, understandably, and with no resources or really any support in that, in me asking for that. So when I heard that concept, I was just like, Duh, this, this is the thing. This this is the thing. So it's not like I, and even now I identify as a non-monogamous person. My partnership right now, we're, we're primarily monogamous. We have threesomes and go on dates with other folks and go to play parties and stuff together, but we don't date one on one, at least not in this moment. And that's looked different in various partnerships in the past. But, I was determined from that point on to always be creating my relationships, regardless of what they wind up resembling, to be very foundational. And what is it that we're agreeing to? What do we want this relationship to be like? And how can we make it perfectly tailored to us, the people involved in it? And how can that be flexible and change over time as we change? So that, to me, is non-mongamy, that creative process. So, so that's what resonated so much with me that day and so still really does.

Fernanda [00:19:59] I think that a lot of your work is also focused on communication, and I feel like that's a very important key, especially when one is like starting to see someone. I realize through trial and error that, at least for the moment, I'm not really looking for partnership outside of my primary partner. You know, I'm kind of like looking for fun. You know, more than anything, and I'm not like closed to the idea of one day having a secondary partner. But you also don't want to lead people on when you know you might have certain boundaries, you know? Well, or maybe you don't know them that well, but you you want to be respectful towards that person. Another thing I've noticed is that I tend to want to see new people all the time, which means that because we only have so much time and energy, I might not want to continue seeing someone who wants to continue seeing me because they want to make space for someone else. And a part of me just want to wants to come on the first date and be like, Listen, this is just for fun. And I kind of do say that. Yeah, but also, I don't want to come across as like being closed to things being different, you know?

Ariella [00:21:15] Totally. How has that been working for you when you've been transparent in that way?

Fernanda [00:21:21] Well, I feel like I've only done it more recently because I've only come to that realization through trial and error. So yeah, at first I didn't really say any of that because I didn't really know and I had a lot of like issues dealing with, and this is also something that I wanted to to ask you about, like feelings of infatuation, because as I'm sure you are familiar with many of your clients, especially at the beginning

Ariella [00:21:47] Yeah.

Fernanda [00:21:48] ...one has like this flood of emotions. I just kind of like, take over your body and sometimes like, you cannot really think about anything else and and what has happened to me and what I realize with them. And this is also something that I like to put out there for whoever is feeling those feelings, especially if you have a primary because then those feelings can also come with the fear of, Oh, is this going to effect my primary relationship? And what I realize is that for me, I feel like it's the fourth date that like, the bail comes up, the hormones level out a little bit. The infatuation kind of fades away and I'm able to see things more clearly. So now, even if I do have those feelings at the beginning, I don't feel so blindsided by them because I'm like, OK, I'm

going to give myself until the fourth date to start worrying if there's anything to like, worry about. But but how? How do you deal with those feelings?

Ariella [00:22:43] Yeah, there's so much in what you just said. What I'm struck by, though, and what I'm obsessed with, is that you have figured out for you what it is that you are actually looking for. You're starting to figure out, or have started to experiment with communicating that to other people? But also what I love is that you've figured out, for me personally, date four is where I kind of check in and where I'm like, How are these feelings of new relationship energy calibrating or not calibrating? How does this work or not work with my current and existing relationships that I already have? So I think that that's like that's the work is to is to not necessarily be like, OK, this is how long your relationship energy lasts. This is how to handle it. It's like, what does it feel like for you? When does this fade for you? How do you want to handle it? Um, so I think that you're doing a really good job in being honest with yourself and receiving the information that your body and brain are communicating with you about what's right for you at a given moment. So I just want to start by saying that.

Fernanda [00:23: 46] Thank you.

Ariella [00:22:48] Yeah. Um, ok, I feel like there's a few different directions that we can kind of ping pong in here. What's the what's on your mind?

Fernanda [00:23:56] I mean, I think I'm talking more generally about people who are in non monogamous relationships and then they start dating and they may love their primary partner very much, but they have very strong feelings of infatuation for this new person they just met, and they fear that that might effect their relationship, which of course, like, one of the reasons why I make this podcast is for people to understand that the fact that you may have really strong feelings for one person doesn't mean that that's going to necessarily effect your relationship. But in the moment, it just feels overwhelming, you know, and it feels overwhelming on its own if you didn't have a primary partner, but then on top of that, you have a partner. So, you know, like, I don't know if there's a way to not let that infatuation make you feel guilty about your primary relationship.

Ariella [00:24:52] Well, first, I would say that like having that infatuation and new relationship energy (NRE) is super normal. If you can already understand that what your body is going through, being flooded with hormones in this way about a new person that entered your life is what happens most of the time, unless you don't like the person. But this overwhelming sensation for new people, if you're getting along with them, is like just a really normal thing to happen. So if you're going to be poly or if you're going to be non-monogamous, we don't want that, those feelings to be coupled with anxiety about what's going to happen to the relationship that you're currently in. Because yes, we can hold space for for all of that, right? But more than that. The, the fear of having it effect your relationship, everything in life effects your relationship. If you've got a new job, it effects your relationship. If you have to move to different city, it effects your relationship with you. If you lose access to your cell phone, if it breaks, that effects your relationship. So like the fear of effecting the relationship that we need to be worried about, it's like, OK, what...What is not working in the relationship? Or where can I find more creativity or more freedom here to allow space for the things that I'm experiencing? Is my partner willing to meet me on that? What needs do I have in my own life, separate from the relationship? How can we create something that accommodates that? Is my partner willing to do that? So I think that like, transparency with your partner about what it is that you're experiencing to whatever extent you all have decided is comfortable for you, is a great idea and your partner also naming like, Hey, this is I'm feeling a little this way about this thing and I think I might need this or this might be helpful for me as you're experiencing this, is also the way to go about this. There's an amazing TikTok account called decolonizing couples who are poly focused. I'm not sure if you all have seen their content, but I know

Fernanda [00:26:52] I'll link it in the case.

Ariella [00:26:54] And I'm Chef's Kiss obsessed with them, but they just had a tick tock about one of them coming back, being like, I am obsessed with this person I'm seeing and the couple and you see them kind of work through, I don't think that they were like actually working through the

thing in real time, but you see them kind of act out what this conversation might look like for them when this person comes back says they're obsessed with the person they just went out with. And that and the other partner is kind of like, I'm feeling a little bit uncomfortable about how many nights you're spending with them compared to me. I think that when you're with them, I could use a little bit more words of affirmation every once in a while so that you kind of see what some options are for navigating certain conversations like this. And I think it's really dependent on the couple, but they've got some great frames, so I would definitely recommend checking them out.

Mariah [00:27:42] Oh, I love that. I love the fact that kind of putting it in real time, like you said, where it's you, a conversation or like a conversation that they've had because I think that's the most difficult part is a lot of us do not know how to communicate properly, and that's something that we're still learning and trying to be transparent when you do feel guilty or, you know, just saying what it is that you need without diminishing your partner and their needs. So I think that's a great resource.

Ariella [00:28:11] And I think that also if you're new to non-monogamy or polyamory, guilt is an interesting emotion because, guilt is, I think, what what psychologists say about is that guilt is useful for if you want to make a change, then then having guilt is like a is an important emotion. But sometimes we experience guilt when there isn't a change that's actually needed. And in that case, guilt is not a super helpful emotion except to understand where you're at emotionally. So like for people that are new to non-monogamy and polyamory, sometimes you might experience guilt about things that you really don't need to be experiencing guilt about. I remember like the first time I was hooking up with people outside of my relationship, I was like, Oh, like, I feel like I'm doing something wrong.

Polycurious [00:28:53]: (in unison, lol!) Yeah (laughs)

Ariella [00:28:55] But I'm not, I'm just I'm just doing the thing that my partner and I had said was okay. There's a bit of a learning curve there to to be like, Alright, like, no, you know, this is within the confines of what we what we're allowed to do. And I just need to process this with myself of like, okay, like, this is okay, this is safe. What is feeling uncomfortable here?

Fernanda [00:29:17] Yeah, but you know what? What's interesting is that sometimes it isn't within what you are allowed to do. People request from their partners that they are free to have sex, but they cannot have feelings for the person. And that's not something that one can control, right? And this is not something that, you know, my partner told me explicitly, but obviously I knew that he felt more comfortable about me having sex with other people more than me having feelings for other people. And so I felt like in a way, I was like betraying him by having feelings for someone else, even though he didn't explicitly said that. And I know couples, non-monogamous couples who have that explicit agreement, and that can be very difficult. And the way it like, played out for me was that I did bring it up with my partner. But then, and I felt great, I felt like a weight had been lifted. But then those feelings of infatuation for the other person kind of faded out and then a part of me thought, like, was it even worth bringing it up, you know? Because sometimes we just have to give it a little time before knowing whether it's actually, like, significant enough to bring it up to your partner. Because having that conversation of, "Hey, I'm having feelings for someone else" is a very difficult conversation to have.

Ariella [00:30:36] Totally. So this is like talking about agreements and relationships. So like, yes, you can experience guilt because what you're doing isn't exactly within the confines of what you decided. You can experience guilt because you're just doing a new thing and we, our bodies haven't been taught how to do the new thing, especially when we've learned that there is a one right way to do it. So I think that, like all of the above, is true, and I think that you figured out what works for you and like, I'm not going to talk to my partner about this until I go out with someone, you know, four times or whatnot and allow that infatuation to kind of simmer down a bit and see where I'm at, I think that like, if that's the the thing that works for you, two, then that's the thing that works for you two. I think that also like, yes, you can't exactly control if you have feelings for someone, but there are definitely ways to, um, not be available for that. And constraints you can add to how you are seeing people outside of your relationship to not really allow the space for feelings to develop. And that, I think, is also another option here.

Mariah [00:31:40] In what ways do you find you can give yourself constraints in that way?

Ariella [00:31:46] Well, actually, I had a therapist that sent me this podcast back in like twenty seventeen or twenty eighteen, I'll try to see if I can find it. Basically, it was like how to have casual sex responsibly. And it was, *Shameless Sex*. I forgot how to pronounce his last name, but read more. I can't. I can't remember at this moment. Anyway, he gave a lot of advice in this podcast is great. You can get it, though I haven't listened to it in quite a few years, so I can't promise how it's aged over time as these things are, but anyway, basically, some of the things that I think I remember him saying are like not to have sleepovers or not to text between dates, or only to have only to see someone every two weeks or once a month. Like, you can put actual constraints around your time, on your interactions, on the level of vulnerability you have with each other. From my experience of non-monogamy, I was in a relationship for almost three years where we would actively date other people, but we didn't identify as poly. We identified as non-monogamous and we would date people together, but primarily date people separately. You can also just not be open to developing feelings for people, and that can be okay, but I think that if you're secretly hoping you will develop feelings, you're like, you really want to maintain a lot of openness around that, then that might be actually shift in agreements that needs to happen with your partner. That might be something that you are actually craving more of in a legitimate way versus knowing that I'm actually good with just having casual sex. So that's something else to keep in mind.

Mariah [00:33:24] Yeah, I think those are really good tips and especially like very specific tips of what can actually, you can actually do to help with that, especially if that's something that you're worried about. I know that, you know, for me, I fall very quickly and like, you know, I definitely get into that infatuation stage and like, just jump right in. And, um, yeah, I think that if I, if I were non-monogamous right now or dating other people, those would be really, really helpful for me specifically to put in play.

Ariella [00:33:56] Yeah. Totally. And that was also how I in part took care of the people I was dating. So like when I wasn't in a place to develop feelings for someone because my relationship agreements didn't allow for it. I also would try not to see someone more than, once more than once, period or more than once a month, you know, because I don't want you to develop feelings for me either, like this can be a bit more brief in our interactions. Yeah.

Mariah [00:34:24] Yeah And it helps with what kind of you were talking about, Fer, about being transparent with people that you are dating and telling them kind of where you're at, setting up those boundaries with them as well just makes it very clear for everyone involved.

Ariella [00:34:40] Yeah, I would try to do that pretty at the get go when I was dating in that way. And that was just kind of what feels best for me. And also, it's like a big value I have around transparency, so I would try as much as possible to give people as much information as they might need in order to consent to what's going to happen, if I have that information myself. Like what you were saying before, you didn't necessarily have the information that you weren't available for these things. So. And you know, me, when I was figuring out if I was queer, I didn't have the information, so sometimes you don't have the information. Sometimes we have the information. For me personally, if I have the information, I like to share that information.

Fernanda [00:35:20] Yeah, for sure. And I think that there are ways of sharing it that's not necessarily like, "OK, let's sit down and have this conversation." You can do that if that feels right, but at least for me, normally when I share these, I, you know, I might be talking about my own non-monogamous journey if they ask about, you know, my relationship structure and then I can talk about how it has evolved and how with time I realize of these things. And you know, there's ways of of making it so it's not like this super heavy conversation, but you are still being honest. And you also talk about how there are certain things that you don't have to disclose necessarily like, something that you've talked about is if you are new in your queer journey and you are in that first date and you're nervous, you don't necessarily have to say that, you know, I came out last week and this is my first time. You know, I do think that there's a certain point in which, you know, it is useful context for the person you are interacting with. Like many people might be feel more comfortable just sharing that piece of information, but it doesn't have to be like, you know, this big thing that I'm going to dump, it can just be like, "Yeah, you know, I just recently started

exploring” and you can just say, you know, casually and it doesn't have to be this like big being heavy thing, you know?

Ariella [00:36:41] Totally, totally yeah. As far as that goes, I have like, I have some theories on this, but you know, this is opinion, right? And I did a lot of polls on this on my Instagram account to kind of like actually hear from queer people themselves, like what is your preference? Do you want people to share that information with you? Does it matter or do you care? Do you not care? So basically my theory around this, is if you know you're queer, regardless of how recently or how long ago you received the information or you knew that information about yourself, you don't have to share where you're at in your queer journey. If you know, that if you're someone like me where I really didn't know if I was queer, when I started really taking queer people seriously, then I would say to share so that someone is able to fully consent to being in that experience with you and being on that journey with you. So that's like a difference between like you use the word exploration like, I know I'm queer, I'm exploring versus experimentation where like I might dip my toe in and out of this before I totally understand what's going on for me. So I say, if you're in that kind of camp, that it's kind to be transparent to the people that you're with because a lot of queer people have been burned or hurt by folks who didn't disclose that they were really on more of an experimental journey. And then they realize that they're straight and that's hurtful versus someone being like, I am like, I am more on an experimental journey. Do you want to be on it with me? If not, that's OK. And that makes sense. Like, you might not want to spend your time with me. So I think that that's best practice, in my opinion. As far as the polls that I had done with my followers, a lot of people agreed with that, where they if you were experimenting, they want to know. But as far as if you're exploring, they also kind of wanted to know so that they can handle the date or the sex or whatever it is with a bit more tenderness and a bit more care and consideration, um, maybe at a slower pace at, which we should always be calibrating what the person that we're with anyway, but in general, there was a lot of really sweet comments about like, “I would want to know so I can take better care of you” or, you know, things along those lines. So, um, but my last point I'll say about this is I also loved what you were saying about, not saying it as if you're like, “I have this huge piece of information I need to give to you.” It's more like this is a part of my identity that I'm cool with. This is a part of myself that I'm cool with and how you receive that information will tell me everything I need to know about you. So this is like we can share as more matter of fact, when we're discussing things like that.

Mariah [00:39:27] Yeah, I'm actually curious to kind of bring this back to the idea of sharing this type of information on a first date or when you first meet someone and are exchanging numbers or whatever it might be, when it's appropriate to disclose your relationship status and is, you know, that something that you owe someone? Or is that something that you kind of decide with your partner like, you know, you don't need to share that you're in a relationship until it gets to a certain point where you feel like it's important? Where do you feel like that those boundaries are like ethically best used?

Ariella [00:40:07] I would ask if, if you were the one asking me this question, if you were my client, I would say, “If the situation were reversed, you were the single person and you were going on a date with someone. At what point would you want to know that they were in a relationship?”

Mariah [00:40:20] I would want to know right away.

Ariella [00:40:] Me too. Yeah. And it depends!

Mariah [00:40:] Yeah, and I'm very upfront. I'm a very big person on transparency and just like laying it out as it is, you know, but I know that it is a tricky thing for a lot of people.

Ariella [00:40:36] But it's like, this is where we want to have right and wrong. We want to have ethical and unethical. But a lot of times it does come down to personal choice, like there's no research on this that tells you is the best time. This is all like, we're sourcing this from ourselves. Like, this is qualitative data. This is not like we don't have. There is no right and wrong here. It's a lot a matter of preference to me, but I think that it's so important to navigate preference from the other person's point of view. What would I prefer if I were in your shoes? And to me, that's total transparency. I don't want to go out with anybody who I don't know they're in a relationship before we go out, that feels like I'm, you know, I didn't get a chance to really agree or not agree

fully to this. But, do I need to know someone's in a relationship if we make out at the club, in pre-COVID times? No, I don't really give a shit.

Mariah [00:41: 29] Yeah.

Ariella [00:41: 30] I'm probably not going to see again. So I think that it just depends on your preference.

Mariah [00:41:35] Yeah and I think there's also a situation where it's in the reverse effect. So I'm thinking back. I made out with this girl at this club and was really into her. She was kind of really into me. I mean, we were, you know, doing all the things, and she was like, "Oh, I would really love to take you on a date." However, I knew that her partner was also there, so I knew she was in a relationship and me being upfront and like knowing that information, I also was just like, OK, I'm cool with that. I would like that, but I cannot date your partner. So that is like another thing that you can do kind of just upfront

Ariella [00:42:11] Yeah.

Mariah [00:42:12] Is just say your boundaries right away so that, you know, it didn't lead to a date. I don't think that had anything to do with it, but you know it totally. It's just something to keep in mind.

Ariella [00:42:22] Yeah, for sure.

Fernanda [00:42:23] Yeah, I think the way that I that I deal with it, I think I think if you are going on a date with someone, you should definitely let them know that you are in a relationship, if that's the case, because that person has already put time and effort on going to wherever you guys are meeting and is kind of disrespectful if that person is not interested and closed to like to, you know, be with someone who's non-monogamous, then it's a waste of time for them, and it's kind of an unpleasant surprise to have.

Totally.

Fernanda [00:42:25] You might want to, you know, you might want to to talk to them to two, because you may know that they're a little bit reluctant to non-monogamy, but you want to explain, you know, "Oh, this doesn't mean that we cannot date" or whatever, but you can have those conversations before you actually go and meet that person in person. And as you say, like you're at a club and someone you are never going to see again, maybe you don't need to disclose it, but like for me, I normally don't disclose it right away before I even like, made out with this person and I just said it because I feel like I need to put it out there. Then it does create a barrier. So for me, it's like after we kiss, if we do kiss, then I'll be like, "See, I'm really enjoying this and we can totally like, see each other again, but I just want you to know that I have a partner" because you don't know what's in the other person's head, right? And if the other person makes out with you and is like, "Oh my god, I really wish she can be my girlfriend or, you know, like I know monogamous girlfriend or whatever. Like, you kind of have to put a stop soon enough so you're on behalf that person.

Ariella [00:43:58] Or they'll be like, I just wanted to make out, and I never want to see you again, either. Or they could be like, I'm also well, that sounds great. Like so we never know, like I think that's why it's so dependent on what we feel is best individually and through experience and. And I think that we, the three of us, seem to have a, okay we can make out, but that's, you know, then we need to disclose or if it's I'm going to we're planning a date like a dating app or through a friend of friend, then it seems like we would all disclose before going on a date with someone.

Fernanda [00:44:32] Yeah. Well, there's a couple of other topics that I'm interested in talking about. One of them is I heard you mentioning that when two newly queer women are going out because we are used to dating in gender normative way, it's hard for the woman to make the first step, especially physically, right, because you know, we are used to having the guy make the first step or whatever. So, so we might be a little bit more shy. I was wondering if you had any advice on that.

Ariella [00:45:10] Yeah. So this is something that like, I only know this because people tell me this, right? So this is like not like, in the data. This isn't like my theory. This is like clients say this and then I realize it's a problem for many people. So like, I guess, I specify that because I try to stay away from, you know, my, a lot of my content, a lot of my dating theory and education is really gender free, and I really pride myself on that and think that like that is the future we should be moving in. We should be moving away from these traditional gender roles, particularly in queer dating. So this is something that some queer women have brought to my attention in this way, which I think is a really interesting thing. My, so when I recorded a couple of podcasts with

Sandra Banks on relationships show, she calls this getting stuck in the chat and she's Australian, so that's the way she says it. And when she said it for the first time, I was like, I am obsessed with the idea of getting stuck in chat. So she and she kind of talked to me about having this woman over at her apartment, and both of them just talked for hours and hours and hours, and neither of them made a move. And I was like, what? Hours and hours and hours like, we need to figure out how to do this better. And so there is a few things that I would say, and there are so many options here, like automatically kind of you can sense this might be my style, I would be like, "How do you want someone to kiss you?" or like or what would you want them to say? and then you can be like, I want them to say this, and I'm like, say that. So that's one way to get at it. But there's a few other things. One is closing the physical space between you two. So if you're, you know, at someone's house and someone gets up to go to the bathroom, then you can like, sit closer to them when you get back from the bathroom or whatever it is. Also, this can be the kind of thing that like if you're out to eat or getting drinks or whatever. This could be also like crossing the physical barrier. It's like whatever we would consider to be our personal space. Before you kiss someone, you can kind of play with like, how do I get closer to your physical space? What does that feel like? Like, where is the electricity here? What feels like it might be too much? Like, did they pull back? Like, does it seem like that made them uncomfortable? If I passed them a menu, like what happens if we're both holding the menu at the same time? Or if I show them something on my phone? What happens when I'm like, really close to them, like right next to them that way? So there's all these things that can happen. Getting closer to someone for actually kissing them or making a move, so I would say, like try to close the space between you two, try experiment with what that feels like, but the other main advice I have here is to name what is happening. There was I just watched this Instagram reel the other day, I think from Awake and Sexy. This is what I've been doing in teaching clients, but I thought the way that they explain this was so good of breaking up your desire from the ask. So basically saying, I want to kiss you. Can I do that?" Versus like, "Can I kiss you?" Or then you have to make a couple of decisions, all at one time. So it's saying your desire, "I really want to kiss you. Can I do that? and ask. But again, like, I would encourage you listeners to think about how would I want someone to kiss me when we've been talking for five million hours? And what what would I want them to say to me? Why don't I try that first?"

Fernanda [00:48:26] So yeah, and that also ties into the conversation of nonverbal consent. Right? Maybe without crossing the boundary of like touching them? Or maybe if you feel like it's safe, you know, like a very friendly, friendly touch or whatever, but kind of like trying it a little bit and checking in to see how the person is feeling. And this is a tape that I also feel like guys should know when they are like, especially guys, when they're like approaching a woman, when, if they're hetero, you know, sometimes in their nervousness, you know, they just like, go for it and like, they don't read signs when it's very obvious. If, like, you know, the other person is attracted to you, do you just have to make like a really small move and then take a second to check how the other person is.. is responding to that. And you've also talked about, you know, a situation in which you don't know, not only if the other person likes you, but if the other person is queer and you actually wrote an e-book about it, which I'll link in there in the show notes. And I think that that can work as well in those situations. And also for couples who might be looking to hook up with with other people. If like more..more typically at least in what I've seen with my community is like a couple wanting to hook up with a girl or myself, my experience, like being approached by a couple, you know, they might not, I'm polyamorous, but they might not know if I'm bi. If I'd be interested in playing with a couple, and I do think that it's important to have that conversation of, "Hey, are you..Would you be interested in that?" But before having that conversation, you can also kind of play a little bit with those boundaries and check how the person is responding?

Ariella [00:50:11] Totally. I think that's so important and I am so like, it's shocking sometimes when I'm doing research like to prepare for modules and prepare for like the video lessons and stuff that I do. I see information telling people to touch each other and I'm just like, "What are you doing?" You shouldn't be touching people right away. That's not how you flirt. You can't go right into touching like that. Like, we need to totally be calibrating before we ever get to that point. Sometimes I call this pre-flirting. Like the stuff that you do before you actually flirt with someone which can be non-verbally like, we're talking about crossing..that's like crossing the personal space barrier, I guess, is the best way to say that we're testing the personal space barrier a bit without touching. Also, there's way two ways to do this with actual communication like conversations. If someone's picking up what you're putting down, that's not pre-flirting. We don't need to like, go right into like, "You look so good," like we can, we can gauge someone's interest first. So I think that is super, super important to what you're saying about, like taking a moment to recognize what that is and understanding that, like, that's not a skill we're taught. So this is something that I go over in the bootcamp that I run, but also, if you're someone that has trouble picking up cues like this, I just want to say that is totally normal, that you would have trouble with this. This is something that, like you're really not taught. It's all based on like what we've seen or what we've been able to be receptive to. So there are people that can teach you this Mia at @TheConsentWizard on Instagram teaches a nonverbal consent class, so that's a great resource. If you don't.. If you kind of don't like, listening to this conversation, you're like, "Huh, I don't know if I would be able to tell how someone's responding." If I took that moment to check in, then I would definitely recommend checking out Mia's work.

Fernanda [00:52:02] Yeah. And also you can try it, and if you're still not able to tell, but after you try it a little bit, then you can be up front and be like, "Hey, I'm interested in you" or "Me and my partner are interested in you. And we, we we are not really sure if you are", you know, if you are. And something else that I liked a lot about what you've mentioned with it specifically, like not knowing if the other person is queer or not. Sometimes it's not just whether they're queer or not, but are you interested in me? Like the question doesn't have to be, "Are you gay?" Because like they might say yes, but then that doesn't mean that they like me, or they might not be or not know whether they are, but. And you might like me? Yes. Yeah, but they might be like, You know what? Never, never tried it. But now that you bring up that idea, maybe I want to, you know, like.

Ariella [00:52:55] Exactly, exactly. I totally think that's what we should be assessing people for versus assessing folks for queerness, because some people have different levels of access to that information at different times. So yeah, I totally totally agree with that. Also, I want a name too that. Like, yes, we might be folks that have difficulty picking up social cues, but also people do not express these social cues and in the same way. And this varies greatly, especially as it relates to disability or neurodivergence. So if you're having trouble either picking up on someone else's social cues or you're seeing a social cue that you're.. you're it feels ambiguous to you based on the way that someone's expressing it to you. That is OK to suggest ask to be upfront about like what it is that you're looking for and try and get clarity on what it is that the other person is experiencing.

Ariella [00:53:42] Yeah, for sure.

Mariah [00:53:43] Yeah, I love that because I know that we deal with this a lot in the community here. The sex positive community here is, you know, there are situations sometimes where I think it's just people who don't are not able to tell and, you know, so they're they're working in what they believe is right, but they're they don't know because they can't pick up those cues. Yes. So I think knowing that there's a resource out there to that can help with that and help people who are not like innate with it. That's, that's great.

Ariella [00:54:16] Yeah, totally, totally.

Fernanda [00:54:25] Something that I've encountered is that, you know, I'm also very much on your camp of approaching relationships in a very communicative way, but often people are not like on the same camp as as you are and I've had experiences in which, you know, I've just been very open and honest from the beginning, and then I see that the other person doesn't receive that well. And it's kind of like playing the game. Despite me opening up the conversation, it seems like that person is still just wanted to play it cool. Or, you know, might might take my directness as

like, "Oh, she's like too forward." So I was wondering if you had any..any advice on that because there's a lot of things like, "Oh, I'm going to wait to respond to text," you know, so that, you know, the waiting game and things like that that I don't I don't like playing games. But then you do text back immediately and then that person does take three hours even though you know that, you know they saw the text and you are like, you feel kind of hurt because you are like, I'm trying to, you know, play straight and this person is still cheating, you know, kind of?

Ariella [00:55:34] Totally, totally. So I think that this comes down to a matter of preference. Like you, I don't like playing games. I don't advocate playing games, I advocate transparency. That's like really non-game play that's really non-mysterious. I think there are other ways to create intimacy and mystery that don't have to do with, like you guessing how I feel about you. So I think that like when you find yourself in a situation like that, I would really ask yourself, "how do I feel when interacting with this person?" Because that might give you all the answers that you need. Like, how do I actually feel when interacting with this person? Not how do I..How amazing do I think this person is? How am I feeling? Because if you're texting with this person, they're not responding or they're playing a game with you and you're saying that you feel hurt. What..What is it that's keeping you there? You know, like, we have more agency and choice around these people that we choose to interact with or not. And if someone has a vastly different communication style than us, especially if we voiced a preference in this way, then it just might not be a match.

Mariah [00:56:31] Yeah, absolutely. I think that's a good tip, too, is to actually communicate. You know, if you are feeling like, "Oh, this person might not like me" or "I feel like they're playing games" like just point it out and just say, "Hey, you know, I really like you. I notice that it's taking a long time for you to respond. Is that usually your communication style?" or yeah, what's going on here?

Ariella [00:56:52] Totally, totally. I think it's like there is a there is a bit of wiggle room, maybe is how I want to say this, I'm not sure, but like leeway in the beginning. We're like, you're also seeing what is this person's norm and..and calibrating against that. So I think that exactly what you're saying is like, is this like, is this the type of texter that you are like, I just want to be in the know so I'm not taking this personally. I think all of that's OK. And to handle those conversations with a sense of lightness versus a sense of you're doing this wrong or I don't like this, like with a sense of curiosity of like, "I think you're cool. I'm trying to get to know you and understand the way that you like to talk to people like, are you a texter? You do phone calls? Are you a "Let's just talk when we meet up kind of person? Like, what's your.. what's your style here?

Mariah [00:57:41] Yeah, I remember when James and I started dating within, like the first two weeks, we definitely we went in really fast, but he did get to me one point and was like, "Hey, I just want to let you know that I'm really a bad texter. And like, if you if you don't hear from me for like, you know, a few hours or a day or whatever, like it means nothing." So I really appreciated him saying that because I am a huge texter, you know, and he has to remind me that all the time, because sometimes now, you know, we've been together for over a year and it still is a thing and sometimes it still hurts just because I am such a texter. But he just like gives me a gentle reminder. And yeah, it's..it's interesting in that way.

Ariella [00:58:24] Totally. Yeah, it's great..It's great that he communicated that with you.

Fernanda [00:58:27] Yeah. And I love that you mentioned, you know, to also like, think about how you're feeling. You know, that's another thing that I love about your work, that you..you instead of like approaching dating in like an outcome based mentality of "this is what I want to get out of this person." Like, really question yourself like "how is this person making me feel?" And that sometimes tells you more about whether that person is the right person, or maybe about what you need to communicate better in the relationship to feel more comfortable?

Ariella [00:58:59] Yeah and knowing ahead of time how it is that you actually want to be feeling when you're on dates and when you're in relationships, so that you have something to match it up against.

Mariah [00:59:07] Yeah, I love that.

Fernanda [00:59:09] So there's one last question, which is one that we ask every guest. What do you tell to our poly curious person? That can be someone who's new in their journey or just yourself when you were starting and you were curious about non-monogamy, but you didn't really know how to go about it.

Ariella [00:59:25] You don't have to do it alone. Read the..Read the books that are written. Listen to the podcast that are made. Find the people who are exploring in the way that you are, so that you feel some kind of support moving through this journey or find a poly affirming therapist.

Fernanda [00:59:38] Thank you so much, Ariella. This was truly great and there's like so much insight and so much, so many resources, just like packed in this episode. So like, I really appreciate your time. I'm sure our listeners appreciate you and your knowledge, and I'm sure they all want to connect with you. I'll link your Instagram all of that. But if you want to tell us how best to connect so they can hear it as well.

Ariella [01:00:02] Yeah, definitely through Instagram is the best way. I'm not sure if by the time the subtext comes out, if I will have just started the next round of Date Better boot camp. But if what I was saying sounded good to you and you're curious to know more about that, you can feel free to send me a dm or there's a chance I'll have another waitlist up in my Link in bio on Instagram, so feel free to fill that out if I started the next round and then I'll invite you to the round after that

Fernanda [01:00:25] right on your handle is @queerdatingcoach. Easy to remember

Ariella [01:00:30] That's it, @queerdatingcoach

Fernanda [01:00:31] Amazing. Thank you so much, Ariella. That's it for today's episode. We hope that you enjoyed it and hopefully came out with some useful tips. If you do enjoy our podcast, please give us a quick rating. I am sure you hear this all the time and you probably never do it, I know I've been there, but if it really takes two seconds, two seconds of your time to give us a rating and it helps enormously. Also, please make sure to follow us on Instagram @Polycuriouspodcast and feel free to write to us at polycuriouspodcast@gmail.com . Thank you guys for your support. We appreciate you and see you on the next episode.