

Why is it so hard to trust the idea of relationship therapy?



LGBTQIAP couples and families are severely discriminated against and therefore are sometimes understandably reluctant to seek therapy for fear of more prejudice or harm (Grove & Blasby, 2009). Even well-trained and well-meaning therapists make mistakes.

- ▣ Subtle, usually unintentional, negative messages are called “microaggressions.”
- ▣ People at all levels of acceptance and welcoming attitudes can still unwittingly make these errors. They are often unaware of their actions and do not mean to cause harm (McIntosh, 2012; Sue et al., 2007)).

Though not intentional, these mistakes can be harmful if they are not addressed or repaired:

- ▣ Partners become less likely to seek treatment.
- ▣ Partners don’t share important things with their therapist, such as issues with sex.
- ▣ Partners can walk away with a vague sense that something is wrong with them, even if they cannot identify what that something is.

What do microaggressions look like?

Something might bother one person and not another. Simply because it doesn’t bother every LGBTQIAP person doesn’t mean it isn’t important. If it bothers one partner, it is legitimate. For some examples, people said their therapists did the following (Shelton and Delgado-Romero, 2013):

- ▣ assumed that sexual orientation was the cause of all problems (“Well being gay is related to depression and anxiety.”)
- ▣ believed that gay and lesbian people needed counseling (“You need to keep coming.”)
- ▣ minimized the impact of discrimination (“Maybe that comment wasn’t really about your gender.”)
- ▣ attempted to over-identify with them (“My brother is gay.”)
- ▣ demonstrated stereotypical assumptions (“I would not have known you were a lesbian.”)
- ▣ warned clients about the dangers of identifying as LGBTQIAP (“Maybe you shouldn’t be in that neighborhood, you know?”)



These experiences ideally shouldn’t stop LGBTQIAP partners from seeking relationship therapy. Relationship therapy does help. If you are thinking about getting help try the following

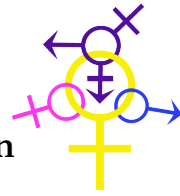
- 1) Do some research online about local therapists.
- 2) Ask around.
- 3) Call us for our resource list.

Training in LGBTQIAO couples and in sex therapy are helpful, but not essential. Relationship therapists in Nevada are called MFTs (Marriage and Family Therapists).

If you find therapists who are not accepting: You are protected by law from harm. Report the MFT to the state board in Nevada: <http://marriage.nv.gov/>

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Resources and References for seeking therapy when you have a BDSM/kink/polyamorous sexual orientation



Help your therapist help you. Most therapists have not studied sex therapy, and they don't always have the background and training in desire maps and the full range of sexual orientations. Clear up misconceptions that frequently occur in training programs – give your therapist these resources.

1) Information and publications for BDSM/Kink/Polyamory

The **National Coalition for Sexual Freedom** runs a program called KAP – Kink Aware Professional. They have resources for therapists who may not know where else to go for reliable professional information. The KAP program has a directory for you to look up therapists who are already knowledgeable.

<https://ncsfreedom.org/key-programs/kink-aware-professionals/kap-program-page.html>

Mission: The NCSF is committed to creating a political, legal and social environment in the US that advances equal rights for consenting adults who engage in alternative sexual and relationship expressions. The NCSF aims to advance the rights of, and advocate for consenting adults in the BDSM-Leather-Fetish, Swing, and Polyamory Communities. We pursue our vision through direct services, education, advocacy, and outreach, in conjunction with our partners, to directly benefit these communities.

2) Specific publications for therapists for polyamorous relationships

If you are polyamorous and seeking therapy, this guide is free and available for download on the NCSF website. It might help your therapist (if you have one or ever need one). Benefits of the NCSF document are that it is free and it is written to the therapist.

- “What Psychology Professionals Should Know About Polyamory” Geri Weitzman, Ph.D., Joy Davidson, Ph.D. and Robert A. Phillips, Jr., Ph.D. James R. Fleckenstein, B.A. and Carol Morotti-Meeker, M.S., M.L.S.P., editors
https://ncsfreedom.org/images/stories/PolyPaper/72548_NCSF_2012poly7.pdf

Many excellent books have emerged since this document - check them out too. Here are two books that are offer agood start:

- *More Than Two: A Practical Guide to Ethical Polyamory* (2014) by Franklin Veaux and Eve Rickert
- *Opening Up: A Guide to Creating and Sustaining Open Relationships* (2008) by Tristan Taormino

3) One of my favorite articles: “Is Kink a Sexual Orientation?” by Jillian Keenan

Download it for your therapist:

[http://www.slate.com/blogs/outward/2014/08/18/
is_kink_a_sexual_orientation.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/outward/2014/08/18/is_kink_a_sexual_orientation.html)

4) We offer trainings and consultation to therapists and professionals

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