



## **Sound Bites on Consensual Non-monogamy (CNM)**

The following sound bites are meant to help you create your own talking points in the way you naturally speak. Work out how you want to say certain things beforehand so you're prepared when you speak to a reporter.

Sometimes there is no graceful way to segue into a sound bite. The point is that you are setting the tone of the conversation, not the reporter. Don't answer any question you don't have a prepared sound bite for because likely that is the remark that they will use in their article. Out of a 30-minute interview, you will only see one or two quotes in print, or if you're being recorded, you'll be on the air for about 10-20 seconds. So don't ad lib because the off-the-cuff remark is the one the reporter will use.

### **What is Consensual Non-monogamy?**

Consensual Non-monogamy (CNM) is defined as a relationship arrangement in which each participant gives informed consent to simultaneous, multiple intimate, romantic, and/or sexual relationships.

CNM can include polyamory, open relationships, swinging, and relationship anarchy. Some people may desire and/or identify with CNM, but not engage in it.

### **Self-empowerment**

Removing the expectation of monogamy, which holds that one person can be all things to someone, allows you to appreciate each person for who they are and create the relationship that is possible, not what is expected.

CNM can meet more emotional, intellectual, and sexual needs through accepting that one person cannot provide everything.

Everyone involved needs to be able to state their limits freely, and have their limits respected.

### **Stigma & Discrimination**

Those exploring or practicing CNM are often stereotyped and face stigma by healthcare providers (Schechinger, Sakaluk, & Moors, 2018; Vaughan et al., 2019).

One in seven people who engage in consensual non-monogamy report discrimination from a mental healthcare provider (Witherspoon, 2018). Another study found that approximately 1 in 5 people engaged in CNM indicated that their therapist lacked basic knowledge about CNM, and 1 in 10 reported that their therapist pushed them to terminate their CNM relationship (Schechinger, et al., 2018).

Like the gay and lesbian community in the 1960-70's, adults need a place where they can get the support of their peers, and they don't have to be ashamed of who they are.

According to the most recent NCSF surveys, 70% of the respondents are closeted about their CNM practices out of fear of being discriminated against – losing their job, housing or child custody.

People engaged in CNM with children frequently experience criticism or discrimination in the form of losing child custody (Sheff, 2011).

### **Mental Health**

The American Psychological Association has approved professional practice guidelines in areas such as multicultural practice (APA, 2017) and working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender clients (APA 2021; 2015). Research is being conducted to expand this work for individuals engaged in consensual non-monogamy.

People engaged in CNM and monogamy report similar levels of relationship satisfaction, trust, commitment, and psychological health (Balzarini et al., 2019; Conley et al., 2017; Rubel & Bogaert, 2015).

### **Relationship Enhancement**

Couples discuss what they want to do before doing it to make sure that it is mutually satisfying. People who are consensually non-monogamous must learn how to communicate exactly what they want with their partners.

Established couples who decide to open their relationship must be secure in the strength of their partnership bond, and comfortable in developing relationships with new people.

Jealousy is a natural emotion and may be a signal that additional communication and negotiation must occur in order to keep the relationship healthy.

Of course, many people prefer monogamy and aren't interested in developing intimate relationships with more than one person. Adults should be able to live how they choose, and no one has the right to dictate our personal choices.

### **CNM Events**

Workshops and meet-ups for those interested in CNM are held every weekend in communities around the country.

Colleges that offer sex weeks are providing much-needed education for young adults to learn about consent and communication.

Clubs like ours have been situated in communities around the country for decades without any problems.

Many educational and social groups are made up of volunteers who teach other adults how to be responsible about their sexual explorations. These groups educate about communication, negotiation and setting limits.

This group is only one of over 500 educational and social organizations that exist in America for adults. Only those who are looking for this education know about them and how to access them.

These attacks are not about sex, this is about a threat to our most basic constitutional rights – our freedom of assembly and the right to privacy.

If one group of people can shut down a private, legal event because they disagree with it, then everyone should be concerned about who is targeted next. Will it be a political convention? A religious gathering? As we've seen throughout history, when you start violating one group's constitutional rights, it can become a very slippery slope.

### **Sex & Spirituality**

People can have deeply spiritual experiences that involve the sexual, physical life force.

Historically, the religions of humanity combined sexual and spiritual practices – Greek, Roman, Druids, etc. It just so happens that the dominant religions in this day and age are sex-negative.

If you truly believe in religious freedom, then you must support a person's right to choose their own beliefs. Imposing your religion on someone else is the worst form of intolerance – the oppression of one church over another, the kind of bigotry that America was founded to oppose.

### **Statistics**

In America, the percentage of adults who have engaged in CNM are (Herbenick, 2017):

- Public sex (≥43%)
- Having engaged in threesomes (10% women, 18% men)
- Playful whipping (≥13%)
- Lifetime group sex (≥9%)
- Sex parties (≥6%)
- Taking a sexuality workshop (≥4%)

Other research has found that 1 in 5 people have engaged in CNM at some point during their life, with higher rates of engagement among lesbian, gay, and bisexual people (Fairbrother et al., 2019; Hauptert, Moors et al., 2017).

If you need more information, feel free to call Susan Wright with the National Coalition for Sexual Freedom at 917-848-6544.