

EXPANSIVE CONNECTION

Are We Ready to Explore Ethical Non-Monogamy?

A private reflection and conversation guide for exploring consent, communication, trust, and your next honest step.

There is no perfect score. Honest answers and meaningful differences are useful information.

A private reflection and conversation guide

Ethical non-monogamy (ENM) can invite growth, connection, pleasure, and greater honesty. It can also bring existing relationship patterns into sharper focus. This guide is designed to help you slow down, notice what is already working, and identify conversations or support that may be helpful before taking a next step.

This is not a test, diagnosis, or promise that ENM will or will not work for you. There is no perfect score. Honest differences between partners are useful information—not evidence that either person is wrong.

How to use this guide

If you are partnered, complete the questions separately before discussing your answers together. Move slowly. You do not need to finish in one sitting, and either person may pause the conversation at any time.

☐ **Yes**

This feels consistently true.

☐ **Sometimes / Unsure**

This needs attention, clarity, or practice.

☐ **Not yet**

This does not feel true right now.

☐ **Not applicable**

This does not fit my situation.

Before you begin

Name: _____ Date: _____

What I hope to understand by completing this guide:

1. Desire, choice, and consent

1. I am considering ENM because I feel genuine curiosity or desire—not only because I am afraid of losing a partner.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

2. I believe I can say “not now,” “slow down,” or “no” without punishment, pressure, withdrawal, or retaliation.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

3. My partner and I understand that agreeing to discuss ENM is not the same as agreeing to practice it.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

4. We can name what each of us hopes ENM might add to our lives or relationships.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

5. We can also name our fears, hesitations, and possible costs without trying to talk each other out of them.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

6. No major decision depends on one person giving in so the relationship can survive.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

Talk about: What would freely chosen consent look and feel like for each of us? What signs would tell us that consent has become pressured or reluctant?

2. Communication and emotional safety

1. We can discuss vulnerable topics without insults, threats, contempt, intimidation, or shutting down for long periods.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

2. We can listen to understand before defending our own position.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

3. We can ask directly for reassurance, information, space, affection, or repair.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

4. We can tolerate hearing different feelings without treating disagreement as betrayal.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

5. We have a workable way to pause a heated conversation and return to it at an agreed time.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

6. We can talk honestly about sex, attraction, boundaries, time, and changing needs.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

Talk about: When difficult conversations go well for us, what makes that possible? What usually causes them to go off track?

3. Trust, repair, and current relationship health

1. Our current agreements are clear enough that we both understand what counts as keeping or breaking them.
☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A
2. When harm happens, we can acknowledge impact, take responsibility, and follow through on repair.
☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A
3. We are not using ENM as a way to avoid an affair, unresolved betrayal, chronic disconnection, or a decision about whether to stay together.
☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A
4. We can identify strengths in our relationship that we want to protect as circumstances change.
☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A
5. We are willing to address recurring conflict patterns rather than expecting a new relationship structure to fix them.
☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A
6. We can be honest even when the truth may disappoint each other.
☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

Talk about: What unresolved hurt could become louder if we opened our relationship? What repair would we need before moving forward?

4. Jealousy, comparison, and self-awareness

1. I can notice jealousy, fear, insecurity, or envy without automatically treating those feelings as proof that someone has done something wrong.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

2. I am willing to learn what my difficult emotions may be asking for.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

3. I have ways to regulate myself that do not depend entirely on a partner immediately removing my discomfort.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

4. We can offer reassurance without making promises we cannot realistically keep.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

5. I can imagine my partner experiencing attraction, affection, pleasure, or love with someone else and remain curious about what support I might need.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

6. I am willing to examine comparison, scarcity, entitlement, and assumptions about what makes a relationship valuable.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

Talk about: Which imagined situation brings up the strongest reaction? Beneath that reaction, what need or fear do we notice?

5. Agreements, autonomy, and boundaries

1. We understand the difference between a personal boundary, a request, and a mutual agreement.
☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A
2. We are prepared for agreements to require ongoing conversation as real experiences reveal new information.
☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A
3. We can discuss privacy and disclosure without demanding every detail or hiding information that affects informed consent.
☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A
4. We are willing to respect the autonomy and dignity of future partners—not treat them as disposable, secret, or less human.
☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A
5. We can discuss what is private, what may be shared, and whose consent is needed before sharing it.
☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A
6. We understand that rules cannot eliminate uncertainty, jealousy, or every possibility of hurt.
☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

Talk about: Which agreements would help us feel grounded? Which proposed rules might be attempts to control another person or guarantee an outcome?

6. Time, energy, and practical capacity

1. Our current life has enough emotional and practical capacity for additional relationships or dating.
☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A
2. We can discuss time, scheduling, caregiving, household labor, money, travel, and shared responsibilities fairly.
☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A
3. We are willing to protect intentional time for our existing relationship without assuming all unclaimed time belongs to it.
☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A
4. We can discuss sleepovers, holidays, public visibility, mutual friends, and shared spaces before they become urgent.
☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A
5. We are prepared for dating opportunities and relationship development to be uneven between partners.
☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A
6. We have considered how ENM could affect children, family, work, housing, community, or personal safety.
☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

Talk about: What resources do we realistically have available right now? What responsibilities must not be neglected?

7. Sexual health and community care

1. We can discuss sexual health practices without shame, blame, or assumptions.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

2. We are willing to make informed agreements about testing, barriers, contraception, pregnancy possibilities, and changes in risk.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

3. We understand that everyone affected needs timely information to make their own informed choices.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

4. We are willing to learn about ENM from credible resources and people with lived experience.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

5. We recognize that new or existing partners deserve honesty, agency, care, and respect.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

6. We know where we could seek ENM-fluent support if we become stuck.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

Talk about: What information would each person need to give meaningful consent? How will we communicate a change in risk or circumstances?

8. Pacing and next steps

1. We agree that curiosity does not require immediate action.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

2. We can choose a pace that honors the most hesitant person without making that person solely responsible for every decision.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

3. We can define a small next step that is less intense than creating a dating profile or meeting someone.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

4. We are willing to schedule check-ins before, during, and after meaningful changes.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

5. We have discussed what would prompt us to pause, renegotiate, or seek support.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

6. We can accept that either person's feelings and desires may change over time.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes / Unsure ☐ Not yet ☐ N/A

Talk about: What is the smallest honest next step we could take? What would make that step feel respectful and reversible?

Reading your responses

Do not total your answers into a single readiness score. Instead, look for patterns:

- **Shared strengths:** Which “Yes” responses feel most dependable?
- **Growth areas:** Which “Sometimes / Unsure” responses deserve conversation or practice?
- **Pause points:** Which “Not yet” responses involve consent, emotional or physical safety, coercion, unresolved betrayal, or an inability to communicate honestly?
- **Differences:** Where did partners answer differently? These gaps are invitations to understand each other, not problems to win.

If a “Not yet” involves pressure, fear of retaliation, intimidation, surveillance, violence, or lack of meaningful consent, pause exploration. Individual support from an appropriately trained professional may be safer than joint conversations. Relationship coaching is not emergency, mental-health, or domestic-violence care.

Choose your next step

If you found mostly shared strengths

Choose one low-pressure learning step. Read or listen to a resource together, discuss what forms of ENM you are—and are not—curious about, and schedule another conversation before acting.

If you found important differences or uncertainty

Slow the pace. Pick one section to revisit, practice the missing skill, or work with an ENM-fluent coach who can help you have a more structured conversation.

If you found pressure, fear, or unresolved harm

Do not treat opening the relationship as the solution. Prioritize safety, freely given consent, and appropriate professional support before making new relationship agreements.

Closing reflection

Complete these sentences separately, then share only what feels safe and useful:

1. What draws me toward ENM is...

2. What I am most afraid could happen is...

3. What I need in order to keep exploring this conversation is...

4. A strength I believe we can build on is...

5. One thing I am not ready to agree to is...

6. One next step I would willingly choose is...

A note from Expansive Connection

Readiness is not the absence of jealousy, uncertainty, or difficult conversations. It is the capacity to meet those experiences with consent, honesty, care, accountability, and support. You do not have to figure it all out at once.

If you would like help exploring your responses, Expansive Connection offers ENM-fluent relationship coaching for individuals, couples, and more-somes.

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This educational resource is not therapy, medical advice, legal advice, crisis support, or a substitute for care from a licensed professional. If you are in immediate danger, contact local emergency services. If relationship conversations involve coercion, threats, or violence, seek confidential support from a qualified domestic-violence resource in your area.