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Good morning and happy Sunday. I hope that you're having a beautiful day and a beautiful weekend. A common question that I get, is today's topic, which is "how do I take small steps? what are the Baby Steps to a big change?"

I feel at a loss a little bit sometimes, of how to give universally applicable suggestions because everyone's situation is so dramatically different. And I don't want to be irresponsible by saying "here's this one simple trick that anyone can use." That's not how complex interpersonal human dynamics work. And, I have been sort of mulling over, "Is there a broad framework that I could at least offer based off of things I've seen? based off of ways that I have made dramatic changes in my life?" because my life today is very different than 5, 10, 20 years ago. So I can confidently say that big changes are absolutely possible, which is the good news. And also, I will offer – to the best of my ability – this framework in a multi part series.

So today will be part one. And I will follow up in the coming weeks with continuations on this in the series. Because I do want to give it more depth than one video could offer it. I don't want to be so surface level, I think inherently there will be some skimming because I am trying to be broad and reach a lot of different kinds of situations. And my hope is that I'll be able to structure this in a way that it will still resonate with you, or it will at least get the wheels turning so you can say, "Okay, let's get started". So, let's get started.

So part one will be: big picture, what is the destination? What is the goal? like elevator-pitch specific, What is the goal? "We are trying to cohabitate peacefully", right? Or "I'm trying to not be controlling of my partner". We don't want to go so big like "I'm trying to be in a relationship" because what is that? Even when people say "we're trying to be not monogamous," Can there be a bit more specificity? Like "we want kitchen table polyamory", or "we want relationship anarchy" or "we have an open relationship, we want to be comfortable going to sex parties, we're swingers." Non monogamy, I feel, can be as big – almost as big – of an umbrella term as "relationship".

Maybe even naming that sub sect still feels too broad, still feels not actionable. So for example, if you say, "Well, I don't want just non monogamy, I want kitchen table polyamory" that is more specific. But then that could also feel like "okay, but what do I literally do?" Can we name the first big concept that would be on the long road to sustainable kitchen table? Like, "I would like to be comfortable meeting my partners' partners", that can be something that we can wrap our mind around, right? If the goal is "we want relationship anarchy", again, that can feel too conceptual. So does

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that mean that our goal is “to name and challenge current power asymmetries in my longest term relationship”? That's still a big task, that is even still kind of a conceptual task. But it's specific enough that we can get focused, and we can get moving. We need to have our eyes set on something that we can picture. And maybe when you say “non monogamy”, you do have a picture in your mind. But if we can just put a few more words to that, just to make sure that what we imagine is also what our partner(s) imagines. So we don't want to get too in the weeds yet, into all of the details. But if we can say “headline thought: what's one sentence of where you want to go?” That can be a starting point.

So I think these five hypotheticals are maybe helpful. Maybe I'll choose these as the through line for this whole series. The five hypotheticals being: 1) to cohabitate peacefully, 2) to not be controlling of the partners I date, 3) to be comfortable in sex positive parties, 4) to be relaxed with meeting metamours, in pursuit of kitchen table, and 5) to challenge and deconstruct my longest term relationships power dynamics, in pursuit of relationship anarchy. I think that might be a way to structure this, is to offer five different examples and then go through the steps or go through the thought processes and the questions for each of those. And if you don't relate to any of those five things, then hopefully something from what I discuss will be transferable to whatever it is that is on your mind, whatever your current real life “Point B” is, I hope that this can be helpful in that pursuit.

So within the What of it, can we break it down a little bit further? we don't want to get too into the nitty gritty yet, into the tiny details yet. But can we name a little bit more specificity to what it is that we mean? at the individual level, at the companionship level, and at the community level.

So for the first example, of cohabitating with a partner, happily living with somebody. at the individual level that looks like, well, not living alone. (Again, some of these might feel obvious, but I find value in still going through this exercise). Individually, it means not living alone, it means giving up the ability to just do some shit without coordinating it, right? I can't just come home with somebody I met at a bar without talking to my partner who I live with and seeing if that's cool. Or if there's even enough space, right? I do give up some of my individual solo decision making power, once I become interdependent in a home space. It could also be additive, like, “I now am not the only one taking care of my pets”. if we just name dispassionately, non judgmentally, What does this literally look like at the individual level?

At the companionship level, cohabiting means we share space, sort of the same thing as “I don't live alone” But sharing space is something that both people do. We agree together to collaborate on a space that works for both of us. It could mean we inconvenience ourselves sometimes for each other. We negotiate logistics in a way

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that doesn't always work in our favor, but we trust that on the average it will. It could mean we share finances and share domestic responsibilities on some level.

At a community level, What does cohabitation mean? Does it create privileges? living with a partner, if you have other partners, it does create the privilege of that partner just has 24/7 access to you most of the time (unless you cohabitate in two spaces). So that's not a bad thing, but it is a thing. So does cohabitation ripple out at a community level? Beyond just metamours, is our space going to be something that can welcome people? Do we want to have gatherings and have parties? What does our space serve beyond just the two of us? Are we choosing to live far away? So then functionally, the two of us are isolating ourselves from community, or it's more of a lift, more travel to go see community and vice versa? It's just a set of questions. What does this literally look like.

For Example 2, the goal is to no longer control your partner. At the individual level, maybe that looks like working on impulse control, and self regulation. Maybe that looks like going to therapy and working on the trauma, the family of origin that sort of created this pattern in us. what is our individual change that might need to happen in pursuit of this goal?

At a companionship level, If I'm not controlling my partner, that does mean I'm trusting them. And now, that then might set off a different chain of events of "how do we build trust if we don't have it?" but for the purposes of this exercise, what does our companionship have to look like? And that could mean, in addition to trust, that we have different lines in the sand of what is and is not too much information. is the discussion or the disclosure an aspect of this impulse? maybe we decide together. as well, are there care plans? does control stem from "I'm scared I'm going to be abandoned, or I'm scared that I'm going to be neglected"? So individually, I'm working on that history of trauma and also in our companionship, can you remind me that I'm safe? And what does that look like? because it's a holistic approach. We don't just work on something and change something at the individual level, or at the companion level or at the community level. we need all of it.

So to not control a partner at the community level. That might also extend to trusting the community, not trying to control the group dynamic, not trying to control the narrative, not trying to be in charge of how something plays out (not just with my partner, but with everyone that they interact with). what would it take for me to build trust without telling everybody they need to act differently? maybe we have more self protection around what we know, what we participate in, maybe there's just firmer bounds of like, what rooms I'm in, what conversations I'm part of... If there's distrust about sexual health, maybe I'm more rigorous about the kind of sex I have, and barriers that I have with people, until there's a pattern of it being fine. Or if

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there's consistent STI testing, and reliability with that, and then maybe I relax a little bit, or I feel a little bit safer. we don't want to say, "well, it would be a whole lot easier to not control you if you would just _____." nope, nope. What am I able to do? What am I able to collaborate with people on? While they are fully able to say, "No, I don't want to do that". Okay, if they don't want to do that, then What's plan B? And how could I still pursue safety, etc. etc.

For the third example of wanting to be in sex parties, sex positive spaces, or comfortable seeing your partner have sex in front of you. Maybe at the individual level, it's work on sexual shame, or trauma, maybe it's work on purity culture indoctrination, or any radical religious upbringing that had very specific messages on sex. just sort of continuing to name that, challenge it, call attention to it.

At a companionship level, it could also look like "I want to trust my partner, I don't want to feel dysregulated at seeing them connecting with someone else and equating that with, 'I'm abandoned'". It could be that we have firmer bounds of what we participate in, of what we see, of what we are present for. what does it look like to be at a sex party together?

At a community level, it could look like "I want to be a party guest that makes other people feel safe, that makes other people feel relaxed and secure. I want to be a party guest that is not shaming or projecting, not violating consent, not doing things that might disrupt other people having a good time." at a community level, it could be, I'm managing the expectations of people. "I might go, I might leave, and it's not your fault. I'm coping with this, this, this." So just communicating our limits, and managing expectations. That's what that can look like.

Example four, of wanting to get more comfortable with [meeting] metamours in the pursuit of kitchen table polyamory. At the individual level, maybe we need to process past bad experiences. Maybe we started at a baseline of being comfortable with metas, and then had bad experience after bad experience. And now we're really cagey about it, with good reason. And we don't want to punish a new person necessarily for that. So at an individual level, me being more comfortable means sort of digesting what happened. Processing any leftover resentments or feelings, pain, anger, that could be lingering. It could also be that there's past trauma, and maybe we continue to unpack that for ourselves as well. Meeting metamours can also be an exercise in self regulation. So to do that, what it looks like is, I'm able to self regulate, I'm able to not be very reactive in a moment, etc.

At the companionship level, it could be that I have very crystal clear bounds of how much I know, how much I see, what I participate in. because Kitchen Table is not a

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monolith. So how do I imagine this Kitchen Table? How do I imagine meeting metamours with this partner?

At a companionship level, It could be [our partner] is not involved in orchestrating it, that they are not a messenger between us. What is it between me and my partner, how does that play out? What is included and what is not included? And at a community level, it can look like “I try to make everyone feel welcome, that I have a space where no one feels alienated or othered”, that I'm again managing expectations of “I'm maybe going to be reactive or I'm working on this. And so please don't take it personal. if I have a reaction, please know this about me”. I love doing that because then we don't have to mask as much. if someone is on the level and can hear that, and can actually not take it personally, I love being able to tell them like, “hey, this could happen, just a heads up”, then it's not like a sudden change, then there's not ambiguity about the why of it. I've said up front, “this could be a thing that happens.” we don't always know how we're gonna respond. But usually when I'm in process, usually when I'm pushing myself past my comfort zone (by design, but still uncomfortable), if anybody could misinterpret a reaction, or if I know I have a ripcord exit plan, and someone could misinterpret my exiting, then I'll usually be like, “who might I want to get out ahead of that misunderstanding and just give them a heads up?” just for a second. that is a very personal choice. That's usually how I like to go about it in terms of how I show up for groups of people.

For the fifth example of challenging power asymmetries in a long term relationship with the goal of relationship anarchy. At the individual level, it could look like ego death, meaning, “do I look square in the eyes the reality that I might associate safety, personal safety, with primacy? that I might associate being in charge or being number one with being valued, period?” what messages or what links do I have in my mind around power asymmetries, especially if they're in my favor? What discomfort do I feel individually, at continuing to move towards a more egalitarian kind of setup? Naming what is my work to do, what is my responsibility to do, I think that that can be really helpful in not making our work someone else's problem.

That being said, there usually are layers to this. So in challenging power asymmetries especially, what does that look like at a companion level? Does that mean we are no longer making unilateral decisions and finalizing them and then announcing them? Does that look like pushing back on a partner if they're falling into old patterns? Does it look like welcoming people over, welcoming people? and rebalancing the calendar so people literally might have more time?

At the community level, does it look like involving other people, involving our other loved ones in naming those power asymmetries? sometimes the people who are on the short end of the stick in those situations are the best people to name that,

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because they are most acutely aware of it. So can we as a group – even if that winds up being in several separate conversations – can there be like in a group chat as well, a group Discord, can there be ongoing conversations about how this looks? about how everyone is impacted? In this example of pursuit of relationship anarchy, it's rarely that an individual or that a dyad, or that even a triad, can really course-correct for all of the power that they hold. We just won't always see it, we won't always have the ideas. So yeah, we want that to be a collaborative effort, a group effort.

Don't worry about diving too deep into “how do we get there??” and getting overwhelmed with potential obstacles you see at achieving that, with potential stressors, concerns, fears, and anxieties. we will get to that in a future part. I just think that naming everything can help us get a clearer picture of the road on which we're traveling. naming it can reveal big disagreements, in and of itself. naming it could reveal that your theory is different. So even if you imagine the same picture, your motivations and your ideologies are vastly different and would become a problem eventually, because you're doing it for very different reasons, or with very different structures in mind. So naming it is not a small task.

Let's try to pause if we feel urgency, because there will often be that. we're in action mode, that's why we're asking these questions. We want to know what actions to take. And so it can almost be excruciating to pause and just name literally the destination on the map. And keeping in mind, you can always change your mind. So “currently, the destination on the map generally looks like this. And what I mean by that is this. Do you agree?” Try to keep it simple. Easier said than done. I know. But try to not spiral with “how is that possible? I'm so overwhelmed”. Like, we will get to unpacking how we get from point A to point B. But we need to know what point B is.

And in addition to knowing what it is, we need to know Why it is our point B. Why is it that we're doing this? So in the future parts, we'll be unpacking that. Let's plan on that. I will see you next week. I love you so much. Let me know your thoughts, needs, desires, all the above, and I'll talk to you soon. Have a beautiful week. Bye

xxx