

ayem



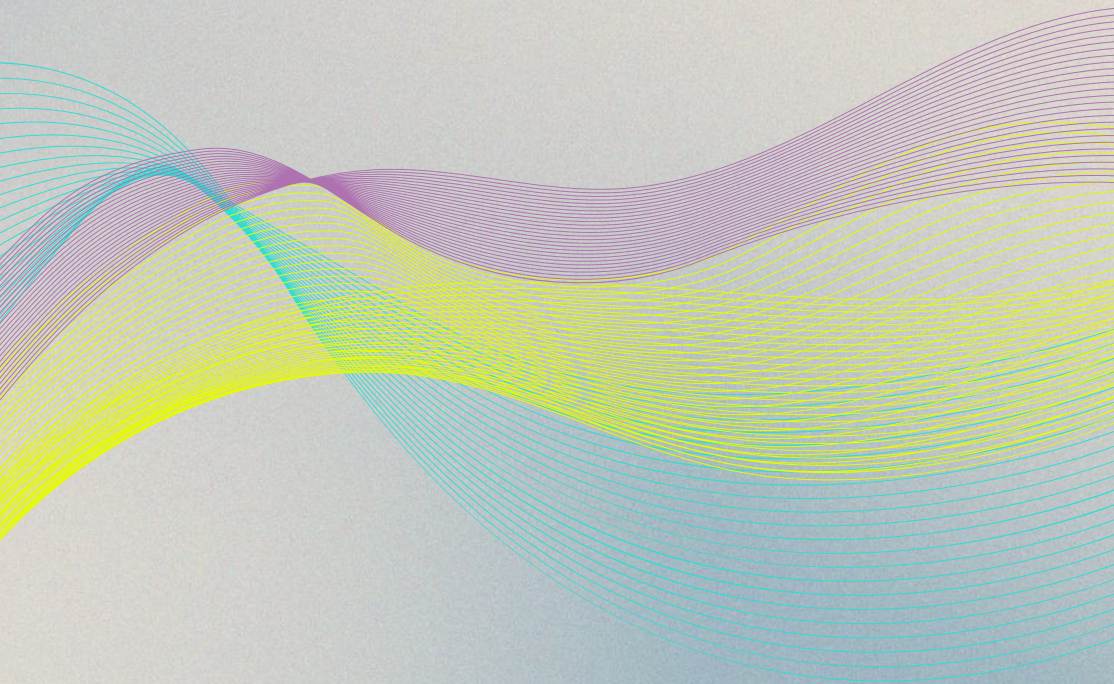
**RELATIONSHIP  
ANARCHY**

**A ZINE**

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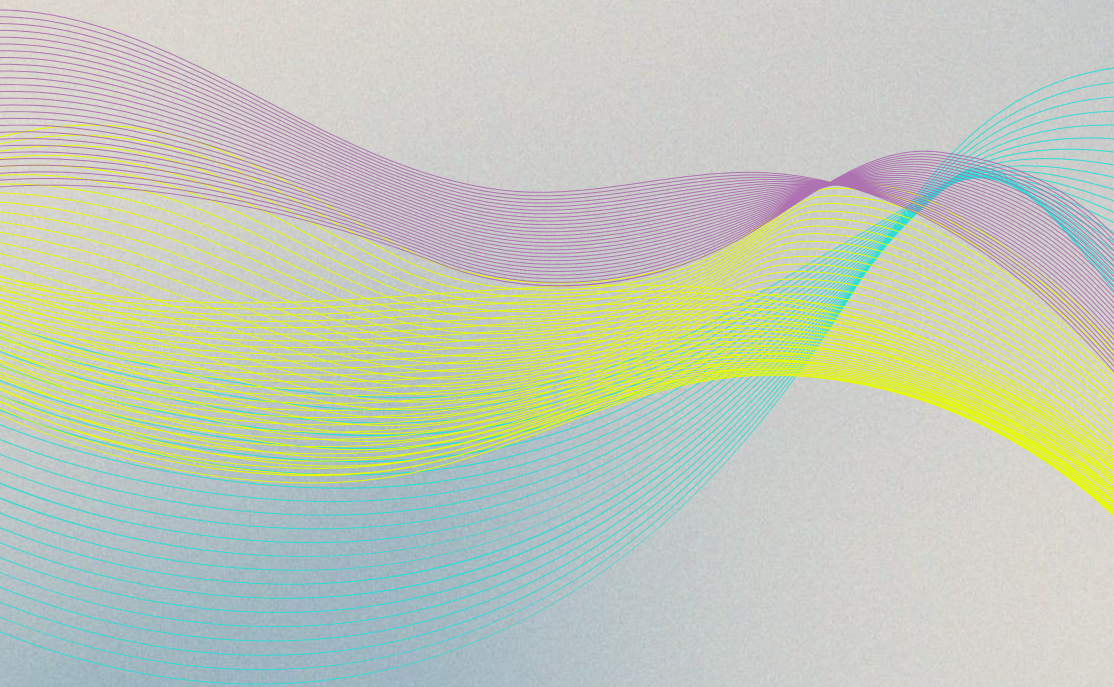
**ayem is a creative studio  
dedicated to building equity  
for the global LGBTQIA+  
community.**



**the experiential branch of ayem combines educational entertainment, sociocultural research, and human design to create impact-focused experiences and workshops for queer communities around the globe.**

**the media branch of ayem publishes insightful content that explores new structures of queer living and highlights queer creators, entrepreneurs, and change-makers.**

**the DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) branch of ayem helps companies build internal and external cultures that actively support and champion the advancement of intersectional queer communities and employees.**





**TRAUMA**



**POSSESSION**

**INDEX**



**COMMITMENT**



**EX  
PE**

**ROMANCE**

**C**

**TA  
TIO  
NS**

**BOUNDARIES**



## **5 — relationship anarchy**

*Originally published by Andie Nordgren, Repurposed for ayem*

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# THE RELATIONSHIP ANARCHY MANIFESTO



## **LOVE IS ABUNDANT, AND EVERY RELATIONSHIP IS UNIQUE**

**RELATIONSHIP ANARCHY QUESTIONS THE IDEA THAT LOVE IS A LIMITED RESOURCE THAT CAN ONLY BE REAL IF RESTRICTED TO A COUPLE. YOU HAVE THE CAPACITY TO LOVE MORE THAN ONE PERSON, AND ONE RELATIONSHIP AND THE LOVE FELT FOR THAT PERSON DOES NOT DIMINISH LOVE FELT FOR ANOTHER. DON'T RANK AND COMPARE PEOPLE AND RELATIONSHIPS - CHERISH THE INDIVIDUAL AND YOUR CONNECTION TO THEM. ONE PERSON IN YOUR LIFE DOES NOT NEED TO BE NAMED PRIMARY FOR THE RELATIONSHIP TO BE REAL. EACH RELATIONSHIP IS INDEPENDENT, AND A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AUTONOMOUS INDIVIDUALS.**

## **LOVE AND RESPECT INSTEAD OF ENTITLEMENT**

**DECIDING TO NOT BASE A RELATIONSHIP ON A FOUNDATION OF ENTITLEMENT IS ABOUT RESPECTING OTHERS' INDEPENDENCE AND SELF-DETERMINATION. YOUR FEELINGS FOR A PERSON OR YOUR HISTORY TOGETHER DOES NOT MAKE YOU ENTITLED TO COMMAND AND CONTROL A PARTNER TO COMPLY WITH WHAT IS CONSIDERED NORMAL TO DO IN A RELATIONSHIP. EXPLORE HOW YOU CAN ENGAGE WITHOUT STEPPING OVER BOUNDARIES AND PERSONAL BELIEFS. RATHER THAN LOOKING FOR COMPROMISES IN EVERY SITUATION, LET LOVED ONES CHOOSE PATHS THAT KEEP THEIR INTEGRITY INTACT, WITHOUT LETTING THIS MEAN A CRISIS FOR THE RELATIONSHIP. STAYING AWAY FROM ENTITLEMENT AND DEMANDS IS THE ONLY WAY TO BE SURE THAT YOU ARE IN A RELATIONSHIP THAT IS TRULY MUTUAL. LOVE IS NOT MORE "REAL" WHEN PEOPLE COMPROMISE FOR EACH OTHER BECAUSE IT'S PART OF WHAT'S EXPECTED.**

## **FIND YOUR CORE SET OF RELATIONSHIP VALUES**

**HOW DO YOU WISH TO BE TREATED BY OTHERS? WHAT ARE YOUR BASIC BOUNDARIES AND EXPECTATIONS ON ALL RELATIONSHIPS? WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SPEND YOUR LIFE WITH, AND HOW WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS TO WORK? FIND YOUR CORE SET OF VALUES AND USE IT FOR ALL RELATIONSHIPS. DON'T MAKE SPECIAL RULES AND EXCEPTIONS AS A WAY TO SHOW PEOPLE YOU LOVE THEM "FOR REAL".**

## **BUILD FOR THE LOVELY UNEXPECTED**

**BEING FREE TO BE SPONTANEOUS - TO EXPRESS ONESELF WITHOUT FEAR OF PUNISHMENTS OR A SENSE OF BURDENED "SHOULD" - IS WHAT GIVES LIFE TO RELATIONSHIPS BASED ON RELATIONSHIP ANARCHY. ORGANIZE BASED ON A WISH TO MEET AND EXPLORE EACH OTHER - NOT ON DUTIES AND DEMANDS AND DISAPPOINTMENT WHEN THEY ARE NOT MET.**

## **FAKE IT TIL' YOU MAKE IT**

**SOMETIMES IT CAN FEEL LIKE YOU NEED TO BE SOME COMPLETE SUPER HUMAN TO HANDLE ALL THE NORM BREAKING INVOLVED IN CHOOSING RELATIONSHIPS THAT DON'T MAP TO THE NORM. A GREAT TRICK IS THE "FAKE IT TIL' YOU MAKE IT" STRATEGY - WHEN YOU ARE FEELING STRONG AND INSPIRED, THINK ABOUT HOW YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE YOURSELF ACT. TRANSFORM THAT INTO SOME SIMPLE GUIDELINES, AND STICK TO THEM WHEN THINGS ARE ROUGH. TALK TO AND SEEK SUPPORT FROM OTHERS WHO CHALLENGE NORMS, AND NEVER REPROACH YOURSELF WHEN THE NORM PRESSURE GETS YOU INTO BEHAVIOR YOU DIDN'T WISH FOR.**

## **TRUST IS BETTER**

**CHOOSING TO ASSUME THAT YOUR PARTNER DOES NOT WISH YOU HARM LEADS YOU DOWN A MUCH MORE POSITIVE PATH THAN A DISTRUSTFUL APPROACH WHERE YOU NEED TO BE CONSTANTLY VALIDATED BY THE OTHER PERSON TO TRUST THAT THEY ARE THERE WITH YOU IN THE RELATIONSHIP. SOMETIMES PEOPLE HAVE SO MUCH GOING ON INSIDE THEMSELVES THAT THERE'S JUST NO ENERGY LEFT TO REACH OUT AND CARE FOR OTHERS. CREATE THE KIND OF RELATIONSHIP WHERE WITHDRAWING IS BOTH SUPPORTED AND QUICKLY FORGIVEN, AND GIVE PEOPLE LOTS OF CHANCES TO TALK, EXPLAIN, SEE YOU AND BE RESPONSIBLE IN THE RELATIONSHIP. REMEMBER YOUR CORE VALUES AND TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF THOUGH!**

## **CHANGE THROUGH COMMUNICATION**

**FOR MOST HUMAN ACTIVITIES, THERE IS SOME FORM OF NORM IN PLACE FOR HOW IT IS SUPPOSED TO WORK. IF YOU WANT TO DEVIATE FROM THIS PATTERN, YOU NEED TO COMMUNICATE - OTHERWISE THINGS TEND TO END UP JUST FOLLOWING THE NORM, AS OTHERS BEHAVE ACCORDING TO IT. COMMUNICATION AND JOINT ACTIONS FOR CHANGE IS THE ONLY WAY TO BREAK AWAY. RADICAL RELATIONSHIPS MUST HAVE CONVERSATION AND COMMUNICATION AT THE HEART - NOT AS A STATE OF EMERGENCY ONLY BROUGHT OUT TO SOLVE "PROBLEMS". COMMUNICATE IN A CONTEXT OF TRUST. WE ARE SO USED TO PEOPLE NEVER REALLY SAYING WHAT THEY THINK AND FEEL - THAT WE HAVE TO READ BETWEEN THE LINES AND EXTRAPOLATE TO FIND WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN. BUT SUCH INTERPRETATIONS CAN ONLY BUILD ON PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES - USUALLY BASED ON THE NORMS YOU WANT TO ESCAPE. ASK EACH OTHER ABOUT STUFF, AND BE EXPLICIT!**

## **CUSTOMIZE YOUR COMMITMENTS**

**LIFE WOULD NOT HAVE MUCH STRUCTURE OR MEANING WITHOUT JOINING TOGETHER WITH OTHER PEOPLE TO ACHIEVE THINGS - CONSTRUCTING A LIFE TOGETHER, RAISING CHILDREN, OWNING A HOUSE OR GROWING TOGETHER THROUGH THICK AND THIN. SUCH ENDEAVORS USUALLY NEED LOTS OF TRUST AND COMMITMENT BETWEEN PEOPLE TO WORK. RELATIONSHIP ANARCHY IS NOT ABOUT NEVER COMMITTING TO ANYTHING - IT'S ABOUT DESIGNING YOUR OWN COMMITMENTS WITH THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU, AND FREEING THEM FROM NORMS DICTATING THAT CERTAIN TYPES OF COMMITMENTS ARE A REQUIREMENT FOR LOVE TO BE REAL, OR THAT SOME COMMITMENTS LIKE RAISING CHILDREN OR MOVING IN TOGETHER HAVE TO BE DRIVEN BY CERTAIN KINDS OF FEELINGS. START FROM SCRATCH AND BE EXPLICIT ABOUT WHAT KIND OF COMMITMENTS YOU WANT TO MAKE WITH OTHER PEOPLE.**

me mostly as film, to be taken back to the darkroom."

Hours spent under dim red darkroom lights however took its toll on

"g Lau's performance in desperation, Lau's father a camera if he could rance (qualifying e did.

**I admit I do a lot of black and white work. Goes back to my early days in that kitchen sink lab, I suppose. Ar when I v fellow**

tion. This brought him into contact with K.F. Wong, one of Sarawak's most f... photographers, who... technical advice. ... Sarawak's ... age in 1964. ... was in a ... Pandan, ... started photos. ... ever I went

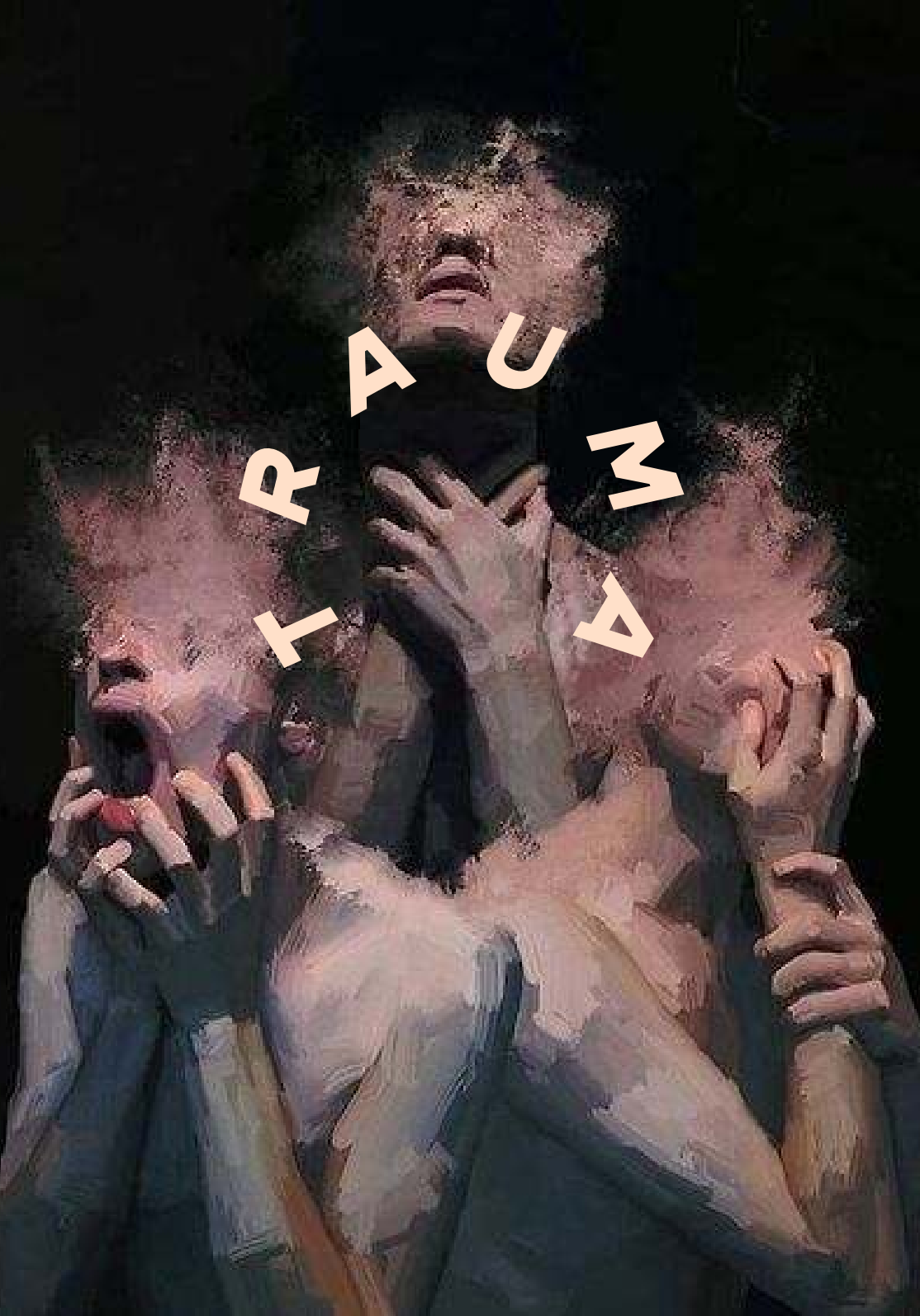


re... the yo... school. I... promised hi... pass the Common... exam for high school).

Gradually Lau's skill with the camera improved, and at the age of 19 he was awarded second prize in the Borneo Photographic Competi-

**and separate cameras, one for colour and one for black and white**

to roam the U... "I took pictures where... I sent copies back to my friends in the longhouses. I learned by trial and



TRAUMA

**HOW IS  
YOUR PAST  
MOLDING  
YOUR  
FUTURE?**



Research indicates that past trauma can significantly influence our behavior in romantic relationships. According to a study published in "Journal of Traumatic Stress" (Berzenski & Yates, 2011), individuals with a history of trauma may unknowingly recreate similar dynamics in their relationships, a phenomenon known as "trauma reenactment." Moreover, the "Journal of Family Psychology" (Mullen et al., 1996) suggests that those who've experienced trauma often develop maladaptive attachment styles, making them more likely to exhibit anxiety, insecurity, or avoidance in their relationships.

Such behavioral patterns arise due to an unconscious desire to resolve or gain control over past traumatic experiences, as postulated in the 'repetition compulsion' theory by Freud (1914).

Hence, our romantic relationships often become the stage where we confront and express unresolved issues from our past trauma.

***communication is the way forward***



# self assessment

**I OFTEN WORRY THAT MY PARTNER  
WILL NOT WANT TO STAY WITH ME**

**I FEEL LIKE I CAN'T OPENLY COMMUNICATE WITH  
PEOPLE ABOUT MY FEELINGS**

**I WORRY THAT ROMANTIC PARTNERS WON'T CARE  
ABOUT ME AS MUCH AS I CARE ABOUT THEM.**

**I FEEL THERE WAS A LACK OF ADEQUATE  
AND CONSISTENT LOVE IN MY FAMILY**

**WHEN MY PARTNER IS OUT OF SIGHT, I WORRY  
THAT HE OR SHE MIGHT BECOME INTERESTED IN  
SOMEONE ELSE.**

**I TALK THINGS OVER WITH MY  
PARTNER FREQUENTLY**

**I DO NOT OFTEN WORRY ABOUT BEING  
ABANDONED**

**I WORRY THAT I WON'T MEASURE UP TO  
OTHER PEOPLE**



**I WORRY ABOUT MY PARTNER LEAVING  
ME IF THEY ENGAGE IN INTERCOURSE  
WITH SOMEONE ELSE**

**I FEAR NOT BEING CHOSEN**

**I FEEL LIKE I NEED TO BE MY  
PARTNER'S PRIORITY**

**yes/no**

# healing is not a linear process

5 steps — healing past trauma in present relationships

- 1. Explore & Acknowledge Past Traumas:** The first step in healing trauma is to recognize and admit that it exists. Past experiences might be influencing your present behavior and emotions in your romantic relationship. Use introspection to understand your reactions, fears, and triggers. Recognizing these patterns is the first step towards breaking them.
- 2. Therapy WORKS:** Psychotherapy, particularly trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy (TF-CBT), has proven effective in addressing past traumas. A professional can provide you with tools and strategies to cope with and heal your past traumas. They can provide a safe space for you to process your feelings, helping you unravel complex emotions and make sense of them.
- 3. Openly Communicate, Even When It's Hard:** Share your experiences and feelings with your partner. It's essential for them to understand what you've been through and how it affects your relationship. This kind of vulnerability can strengthen your bond and foster empathy. Just remember, your partner is not your therapist and should not be relied upon for healing, but their support can be invaluable.
- 4. Care for Yourself as if You Were Your Own Child:** Prioritize your mental and physical health. Engage in activities that you enjoy and that soothe you. Whether it's yoga, meditation, painting, or going for a walk, these activities can help reduce stress and promote healing. Also, ensure that you're eating healthily, sleeping enough, and avoiding harmful coping mechanisms like alcohol or drugs.
- 5. Boundaries are the Bee's Knees:** To protect your emotional health, it's essential to set boundaries in your relationship. Express your needs and expectations clearly to your partner and discuss what both of you are comfortable with. Healthy boundaries can prevent further emotional harm and provide a sense of security and control in your relationship.



possession

*El miedo es natural en el prudente,  
y el saberlo vencer es ser valiente*

***why do we feel the need to  
possess our partner('s)(s):***

TIME

ENERGY

BODY

MIND

??????????



**HISTORICALLY  
POSSESSIVENESS IN  
RELATIONSHIPS COMES  
FROM:**

**SOCIETAL NORMS AND  
GENDER ROLES**

**ECONOMIC**

**DEPENDENCE**

**PATRIARCHAL**

**SYSTEMS**

**PROPERTY AND  
INHERITANCE RIGHTS**

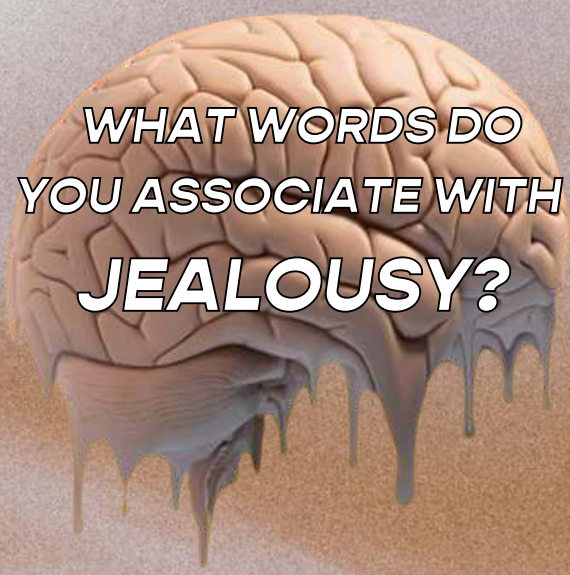
**Our desire to "possess" a significant other can often be traced back to patriarchal and heteronormative structures that have long permeated societal understanding of relationships. Patriarchy posits control and ownership as key male prerogatives, fueling a sense of entitlement towards the time, energy, body, and emotions of others, predominantly feminine individuals. This ownership model, deeply embedded within heteronormative relationship dynamics, fosters possessiveness as a naturalized romantic behavior. It promotes the perception of individuals as objects of possession, rather than autonomous beings. The act of "possession" thereby serves as an extension of this oppressive framework, reinforcing power imbalances, fostering toxic dynamics, and stifling the growth of egalitarian relationships. By redefining romantic relationships beyond patriarchal and heteronormative paradigms, we can aspire to foster relationships grounded in respect, equity, and genuine partnership.**



*Jealousy, Jealousy - Olivia Rodrigo*

**SUSPICION**


**RAGE**



**WHAT WORDS DO  
YOU ASSOCIATE WITH  
JEALOUSY?**

**EMOTION**

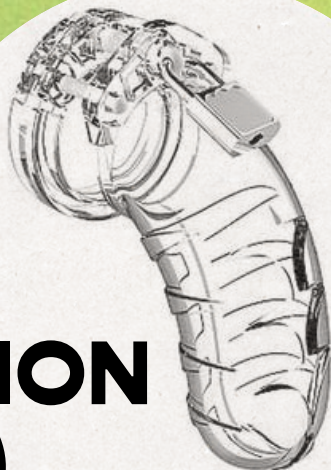
**FEAR**



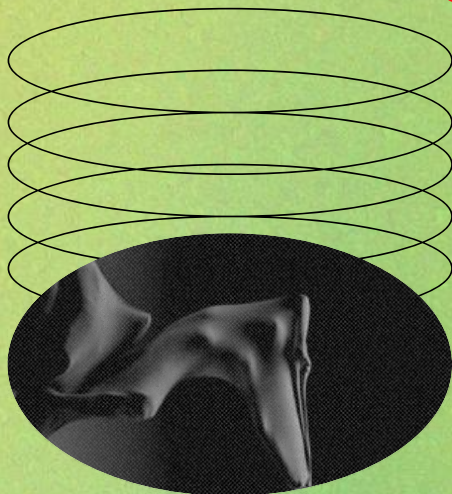
**Jealousy is most common when somebody feels insecure, mistreated, threatened, or vulnerable in a relationship.**

**PROBLEM OR  
SYMPTOM?**

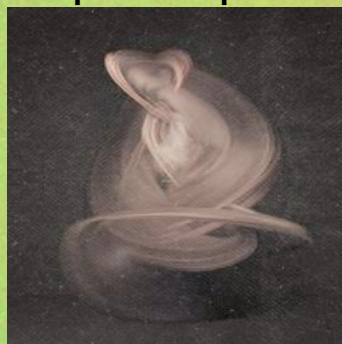
# COMPERSION (NOUN)



**METABOLISE**  
*your feelings*



a feeling of happiness, warmth, or joy a person gets from seeing one of their romantic partners enjoy the presence of a metamour — your partner's partner.



**DOES YOUR PARTNER'S EXPANSION MAKE YOU FEEL EXPANSIVE OR THREATENED?**

**WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN CHOOSING OUR  
BOUNDARIES**



**MÁS VALE HABLARLO**

*in your eyes*

# **WHAT COUNTS AS CHEATING?**

**FLIRTING**

**INTIMATE  
CONVERSATIONS  
WITH SOMEONE  
OUTSIDE OF THE  
RELATIONSHIP**

**SENDING NUDES**

**FUCKING**

**DEVELOPING  
STRONG  
EMOTIONAL  
BONDS WITH  
OTHERS**

**SEEKING EMOTIONAL  
CONNECTION  
THROUGH ONLINE  
PLATFORMS**

**SEXUAL INNUENDOS**

**SPENDING TIME  
WITH AN EX**

**Communicating our boundaries and definitions of infidelity with our partners is crucial to foster mutual understanding in a relationship. Oftentimes, we have different definitions of the basics: faithfulness, intimacy, love, etc...**

# CUSTOMIZE YOUR COMMITMENTS

WHAT DOES COMMITMENT MEAN TO YOU?

*Relationship anarchy is not about never committing to anything - it's about designing your own commitments with the people around you, and freeing them from norms dictating that certain types of commitments are a requirement for love to be real, or that some commitments like raising children or moving in together have to be driven by certain kinds of feelings. Start from scratch and be explicit about what kind of commitments you want to make with other people.*

# WHAT DO I EXPECT FROM...

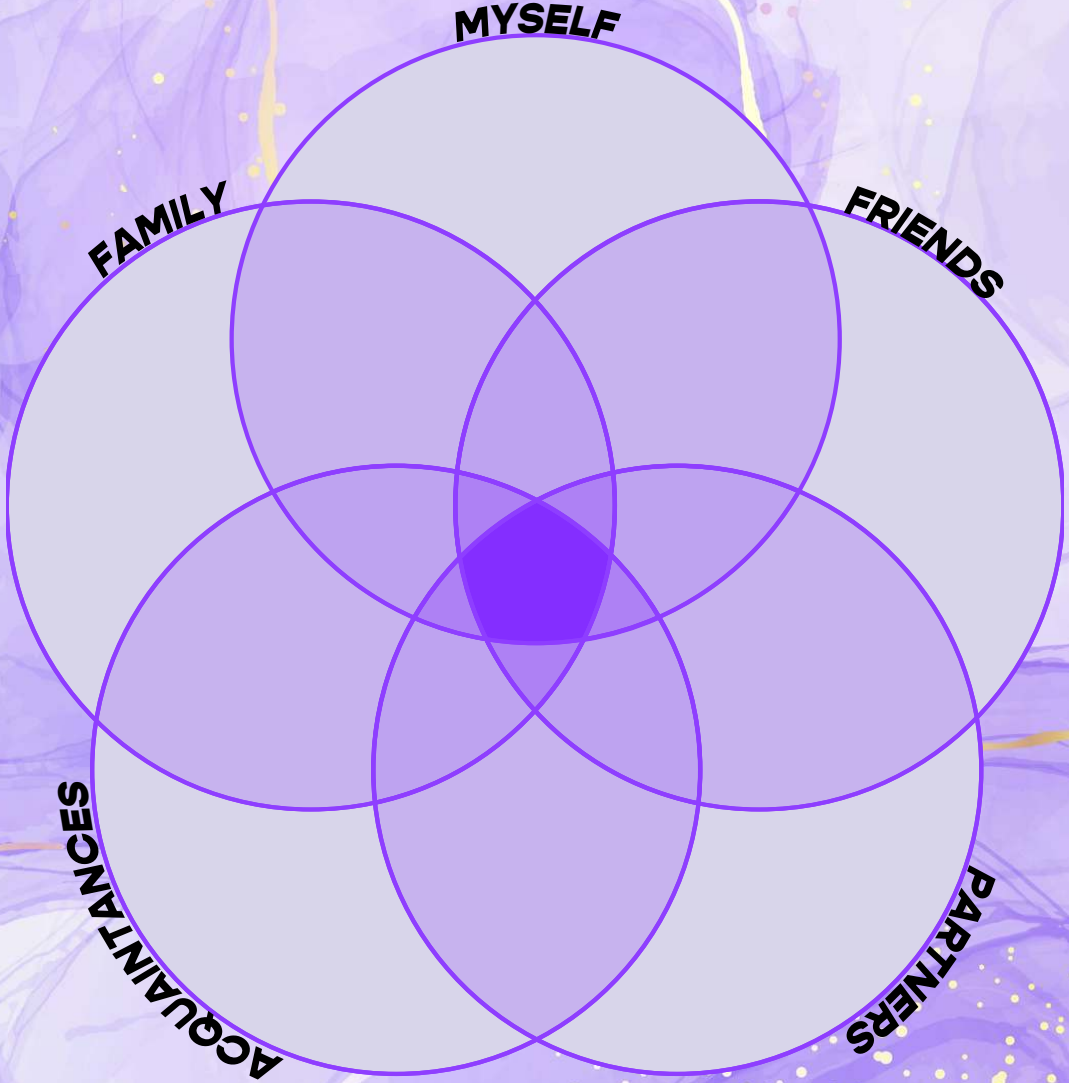
**MYSELF**

**FAMILY**

**FRIENDS**

**ACQUAINTANCES**

**PARTNERS**



**WHAT IS ROMANCE?**



**why do we associate  
physical intimacy with  
our partners only?**

ROMANTIC FRIENDSHIPS



AND

FRIENDLY ROMANCE

# Q&A zine

ayem is a creative studio dedicated to building equity for the global LGBTQIA+ community.

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