

Relationship Survival Guide

Tips for exploring Elsewhere with your partner(s)

Burns can be an exciting environment to explore with your partner(s), but there are also a lot of pitfalls to navigate. The harsh environment, and difference from daily life put a lot of physical, mental and emotional stress on each of us, which can already strain even the best relationships. Add in the wide variety of workshops - especially ones exploring connection, physical touch, sex and kink - the parties, orgies and public sex+ spaces, and there are also a lot of opportunities for jealousy, miscommunication and hurt. Especially if intoxicants are involved.

To make it easier to engage in as many new experiences as you and your partner(s) are comfortable with, we're providing some tips to help! Read through and discuss with your partner(s) which of these might be helpful.

Before the Burn

The most important tool for navigating the burn together safely is talking about it **before** you get there. Important topics to cover include:

- What type of experiences are you interested in exploring, either together or apart?
- What type of experiences are you comfortable with your partner(s) exploring (with or without you)?

Not being sure is totally ok! These are the most important areas to talk about further. Talk about both the positives (things you're excited or curious about, and why (if you know) and the negatives (worries, insecurities, potential triggers for jealousy or hurt, previous bad experiences). Then make a plan how to handle things if they come up:

It's important to try to figure out what you might need to feel safe during potentially difficult moments, such as when your partner(s) are connecting with others. Talk about:

- Where your worries, insecurities and triggers are coming from, and what underlying emotions might be involved.

- Look for strategies to provide reassurance, or affirm the emotions being affected, that allow for possible exploration without it being too much for anyone.

Examples could include:

- Periodic check-ins at parties - so you know your partner(s) are thinking about you, even when they're exploring with others.
- Deciding to start or end workshops together, even if you're doing some of the exercises with others.
- Activities that the affected partner(s) could do while the other(s) are engaging outside the relationship, to keep them from spiraling mentally or emotionally (doing other workshops, spending time with friends, or exploring other activities).
- Discuss how you'll reconnect after explorations outside your relationship - what do you need to be reassured that your partner(s) love you and care about you.
- Discuss how to handle communication in case the difficulty becomes too much.
 - If you're feeling too insecure at a party when your partner(s) are engaging with someone else, is it ok to interrupt them? How will you handle that?
 - You could agree on a quick check-in, in the moment, letting your partner(s) know you'd like to spend time with them later/soon, but without it needing to be immediate.

Decide how to handle communication around new explorations in the moment:

- Should you talk about each potential exploration before engaging? Or are you comfortable with each of you engaging in certain explorations without talking about them first - as long as you talk about them afterwards?
- If you want to talk about explorations before engaging, are there exceptions, or cases where engaging in the moment could make sense, knowing that there could be difficult emotions and conversations later?
- How much detail do you want/need to feel safe and secure?
 - Some people want to know all the juicy details, and feel more connected to their partner(s) by feeling like they're a part of the experience (or just like the feeling of being excited for their partners getting to try all this juicy stuff!).

- Some people want to know as little as possible about the details, and it's important to respect that too!

Talk about how to handle it if you have a fight while there. Do you have friends there with you that you can confide in? What other support networks are available? Don't forget you can always go to Welfare for some quiet time to process, or for a caring person to talk to about it!

As long as you engage with love and care, these conversations ahead of time give you the best chance for safe and loving exploration!

At the Burn

Even with the most careful and comprehensive discussions ahead of time, sometimes things are different than you thought in practice.

Trying agreements Under Stress

Sleep deprivation, strong emotions, alcohol and other substances can affect communication, judgement and awareness of agreements. What felt clear before the burn may feel different in the moment. Being allowed to do something does not always mean it is a good idea right now.

It's important to check in with your partner(s) during the burn, and talk about how things are going.

- Has anything changed since you talked about it? Are things more difficult for you? Or actually easier than you thought?
- Are you getting enough time with your partner(s)? Are you getting enough alone-time, and space to explore things on your own?
- Are there any workshops or experiences you really want to try with your partner(s)? Or that you'd really like to try alone?

We're also all human. And we screw up. If you do, be open and honest with your partner(s), and give them the space and support they need to process that.

If your partner(s) hurt you, try to be understanding without betraying your own feelings and needs. Remember how intense the burn environment is, and how much stress this puts on each of us. Remember that emotions can run more strongly here than they otherwise would. It can be healthy to be angry and hurt - but trust that you love each other and will get through this,

even if the moment is hard. On the other hand, be honest with yourself and each other if the breach in trust may be too difficult to get past.

Beyond Your Relationship

Many relationship agreements focus on the people within the relationship. Remember that the people you meet also deserve clarity, informed choice and care. If your relationship agreements place limits on what you can do, communicate those limits clearly before interactions become intimate.

The people you meet are not supporting characters in your relationship. Their feelings, time and vulnerability matter too. Being transparent helps others make informed choices about their own participation.

And whenever possible, try not to involve others in unresolved relationship conflicts, negotiations or misunderstandings.

After the Burn

We've all heard the advice not to make any major decisions or life changes right after a burn, and this holds true for relationships.

The burn environment can be so different from our everyday life that it changes how we perceive our situation, even if that's only temporary.

- If things got difficult, take some space if you need it, but it's probably best to give it some time before making a major change, if possible.
- On the other hand, you could be so excited by all the great experiences that you want more of that, and find your everyday life dull and boring now.

Either way, know that things will come back to a more stable state after some time, and that it's important to be in that state before making major changes.

If it's helpful, spend extra time together, sharing your experiences and reconnecting in your normal surroundings.

Feel into the things you learned about yourself and your relationship(s) during the burn. Are some of them temporary, or specific to the burn environment? Are some insights that you want to implement in your daily life? How does this impact your situation? Think about it yourselves, and talk

about it together! It's especially important to bring up things that might have bothered you, but you didn't feel the burn was the right place to discuss. Talking through them, and getting each other's perspectives can go a long way towards clearing up potential misunderstandings, or heading off any deeper trust issues that can come up if you don't address them.

Often, partners get closer through their shared experiences at the burn, even when some are more difficult. Sometimes they can deepen existing relationships as they are; sometimes they can be a force of change, moving your relationship(s) in a new direction; sometimes they solidify the realisation that you no longer fit. All of these are ok, and can be important.

Final Thoughts

Expect Imperfection

We are all human, and burn environments can be intense. No amount of preparation can eliminate every mistake, misunderstanding or broken agreement.

Instead of only discussing what you hope will happen, also discuss how you will respond if things become difficult.

- How will you communicate?
- How will you care for each other?
- What would help repair trust if someone gets hurt?

Relationships are rarely strengthened by perfection. They are often strengthened by how people navigate challenges together.

In the end, navigating a burn can be a challenging, but beautiful experience together! We look forward to seeing you and your partner(s) in the dust!