

Manifesto for Relationship Anarchy 2.0

The Structural Level

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Ideologies are based on principles. Manifesto for Relationship Anarchy, compiled by Andie Nordgren in 2006, presents nine principles central to relationship anarchy. Most of the principles are at the individual level and presented as instructional guidelines that can be directly applied to intimate relationships.

The Relationship Anarchist Manifesto 2.0 is a collection of relationship anarchist principles that complements the previous manifesto and adds a structural level to the conversation. The manifesto aims to place the relationship anarchist ideology into its context, and specify its criticism and aspirations.

1st principle: Relationships don't exist in a power vacuum

We live in a white-dominated, capitalist and patriarchal society, in which nothing concerning humanity happens outside, or apart from, power structures. Not acknowledging, and thus, not being able to question, these interconnected structures always serves the status quo, i.e. the prevailing state of affairs and accustomed ways of doing things. Relationships, the way we organise them and the way we attach value to them, are no exception.

2nd principle: Amatonormativity is a power structure that ranks long-term, romantic-sexual relationships between two people as a priority

The term amatonormativity depicts the elevated social status assigned to romantic love and sexuality — more precisely, allosexuality, i.e. non-asexuality — and highlights the monogamous ideal attached to romantic-sexual relationships. Due to amatonormativity, pursuing a romantic-sexual, long-term relationship between two individuals appears to us as the primary type of relationship, compared to all other human relationships.

3rd principle: We are getting positioned with regard to amatonormativity — whether we want it or not.

In our society, relationship-centered lifestyle and the relationship status of being coupled grant us privileges on an economic, social and symbolic level. In addition, the concept of 'the good life' that prevails in our culture connects relationships and happiness directly to one another. This is not only incorrect, but also problematic and exclusionary. Due to amatonormativity, an individual is assumed to prioritise their romantic-sexual partnership over their other close relationships in terms of the use of time, emotional capacities and in instances of making life choices. In addition to the fact that amatonormativity puts a disproportional amount of pressure on one type of relationship — and in the case of monogamy: on one person — this practice also discriminates people who are not dating.

4th principle: Marriage, as an institution, is unequalizing

Marriage as an institution structures private and societal relationships in multiple ways, both legally and in our thinking. Marriage is linked to, for example, social security, taxation, inheritance and international family relations. There is significant symbolic value attached to this type of relationship: it is legitimized by the state as “the foundation of a family”. Monogamy as an institution labels different ways of organizing intimate relationships as “other”, making them seem either inadequate, unsuccessful or incomprehensible. It limits our ability to perceive and truly live all the diverse possibilities of human relationships.

5th principle: Monogamy is not more natural or ethical than non-monogamy

The norm of monogamy dominates our society, which can be seen in the idealization of monogamy in romantic-sexual relationships. On the other hand, in relationship anarchy, monogamy is not considered the default setting of relationships. The idea that we could limit the freedom of another individual who is in an equal relationship with us — whether the relationship is romantic-sexual or not — is incompatible with the relationship anarchist ideology. Each person should have the ability to respond to their own — and only their own — needs and discern their own limits. Dismantling the monogamy norm requires naming and negotiating the boundaries that prevail in the romantic-sexual relationship, both on a private and public level.

6th principle: The duration of the relationship is not a measure of its success

The idealized concept of romantic-sexual relationships is anchored in the idea of marriage-based relationships. A successful marriage, as currently defined by society, is lifelong. Because of this, the length of the relationship is seen as representative of the commitment; it becomes a measure for how successful the relationship is. However, the longevity of the relationship does not say much about its condition. How our culture understands commitment and how it defines a “successful relationship”, have an impact on the kind of relationships we pursue and the kind of relationships we stay in.

7th principle: Romantic love is not superior to or more valuable than other types of love

Love can be defined in many ways. At its simplest, love means a deep feeling of attachment to something or someone. There’s a rich diversity of different types of love. It is typical of our time to not only separate romantic and platonic love from one another, but also to value the aforementioned as more important. We live in a society where the default assumption is that all people feel — or should feel — romantic attraction towards each other, i.e. people are assumed to be alloromantic. “Love is love” almost invariably refers to romantic love, the pursuit of which is presented as one of the main purposes of an individual’s life — at least in the mainstream

media. Platonic love has not been granted an equivalent symbolic value in our society: it is not collectively celebrated, remembered or valued in the same way as romantic love.

8th principle: The fact that most people are allosexual does not mean that sexuality equals allosexuality

We live in a sex-centric world, where sexuality is understood almost exclusively from the perspective of allosexuality. Allosexuality refers to a person that experiences sexual attraction towards other people (to an extent that is deemed 'normal'), and therefore does not belong to the spectrum of asexuality. When we equate allosexuality and sexuality as synonyms to one another, we happen to completely ignore the experiences and the reality of people that belong somewhere to the spectrum of asexuality. Almost without exception, the term sexuality is used synonymously to allosexuality. In other words, allosexuality is a power position that is largely unrecognized in our society.

9th principle: The foundation of a family is not a couple or children, but care

Nuclear family, new family, clover family. The concept of family that prevails in our society is centered on children, and on the adult, romantic-sexual one-on-one relationships. If an individual does not have children, family usually refers to a cohabiting partner, a spouse, or other "established partnership" — or in its most flexible manifestation, multiple such partners. However, there are no valid reasons we only recognize those close relationships between adults that are — or are assumed to be — (allo)romantic-sexual in quality. A family can be, for example, a compilation of platonic relationships or any other type of configuration, where family members are taken care of, even outside the concept of the couple or a romantic-sexual relationship.

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