# In defence of open relationships. A therapist speaks



In a recent column from the Lewiston Sun Journal, a mental health therapist, who identified themselves only as “More Open-Minded in Arizona,” expressed concerns regarding the advice given by renowned columnist Abigail Van Buren, known as Dear Abby. The letter picked up on bias against open relationships in Van Buren's responses to readers. The therapist noted that while they personally favour monogamous relationships, they advocate for a more understanding and nuanced approach to the topic of open relationships.

In their correspondence, the therapist suggested that observing the dynamics between consenting adults in open relationships may require a deeper understanding, stating, “I suggest you reflect on your bias and judgment for people who live differently than you.” They argued that while open relationships can be challenging, they often possess an underlying complexity that deserves more empathy rather than judgement.

In her response, Van Buren acknowledged her bias against open relationships, explaining that her views are strongly shaped by the experiences relayed to her from readers who have found themselves in difficult situations. “I feel the way I do because I have seen and learned from readers that these relationships are often not as ‘free-willed’ as some would like to think,” she stated. She indicated that her primary concern is for those who may feel coerced into such arrangements, suggesting that, even though some relationships might be successful, many stories she hears are rooted in distress.

Additionally, the column included another inquiry from a reader named “Inconvenienced in California.” This letter detailed the living conditions of the writer and their wife, who were renting part of a house from their relatives. Initially, their brother-in-law had promised renovations to their kitchen and bathroom while they were away on holiday, but months later, the work remained incomplete. During this time, the brother-in-law offered a 50% rent reduction due to the inconvenience but subsequently sought to raise the rent to a higher rate before the promised renovations were completed. Van Buren advised that payment should be adjusted only after the renovations are fulfilled, reflecting an inherent expectation for reliability in rental agreements.

These letters highlight the diverse experiences within familial and consensual relationships, including the distinct challenges faced by those exploring non-monogamous options, as well as those navigating the intricacies of rental agreements among relatives. The discussions surrounding these themes suggest a broader conversation about the expectations and realities in varied relationship structures, particularly within the context of the gay community.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.uexpress.com/life/dearabby/2024/11/06> - This link corroborates the discussion on open relationships and the advice given by Dear Abby, highlighting a reader's concern about the shift in intimacy dynamics in an open relationship.
* <https://www.uexpress.com/life/dearabby/2025/01/14> - This link supports the broader context of open relationships and Dear Abby's views on them, including her preference for monogamous relationships and the complexities of non-monogamous arrangements.
* <https://libguides.lib.cwu.edu/c.php?g=625394&p=4391900> - While not directly related to the specific content, this link provides context on evaluating sources and understanding biases, which is relevant to the therapist's suggestion for a more nuanced approach to open relationships.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - Although the specific article is not available, this link is mentioned as the source of the information regarding the therapist's letter and Dear Abby's response, highlighting the importance of credible sources in discussions about relationships.
* <https://www.uexpress.com/life/dearabby/> - This general link to Dear Abby's column supports the ongoing discussions and advice on various relationship issues, including open relationships and familial conflicts.
* <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-polyamorists-next-door/201807/the-pros-and-cons-of-polyamory> - This link, though not directly cited, provides additional context on the complexities and challenges of open and polyamorous relationships, aligning with the therapist's advocacy for a more understanding approach.
* <https://www.hrc.org/resources/guidelines-for-polyamory> - This link offers guidelines and considerations for polyamorous relationships, which is relevant to the discussion on the complexities and nuances of non-monogamous relationships.
* <https://www.apartmenttherapy.com/how-to-negotiate-rent-with-landlord-36833651> - This link provides advice on negotiating rent and dealing with rental agreements, which is pertinent to the issue raised by 'Inconvenienced in California' regarding incomplete renovations and rent adjustments.