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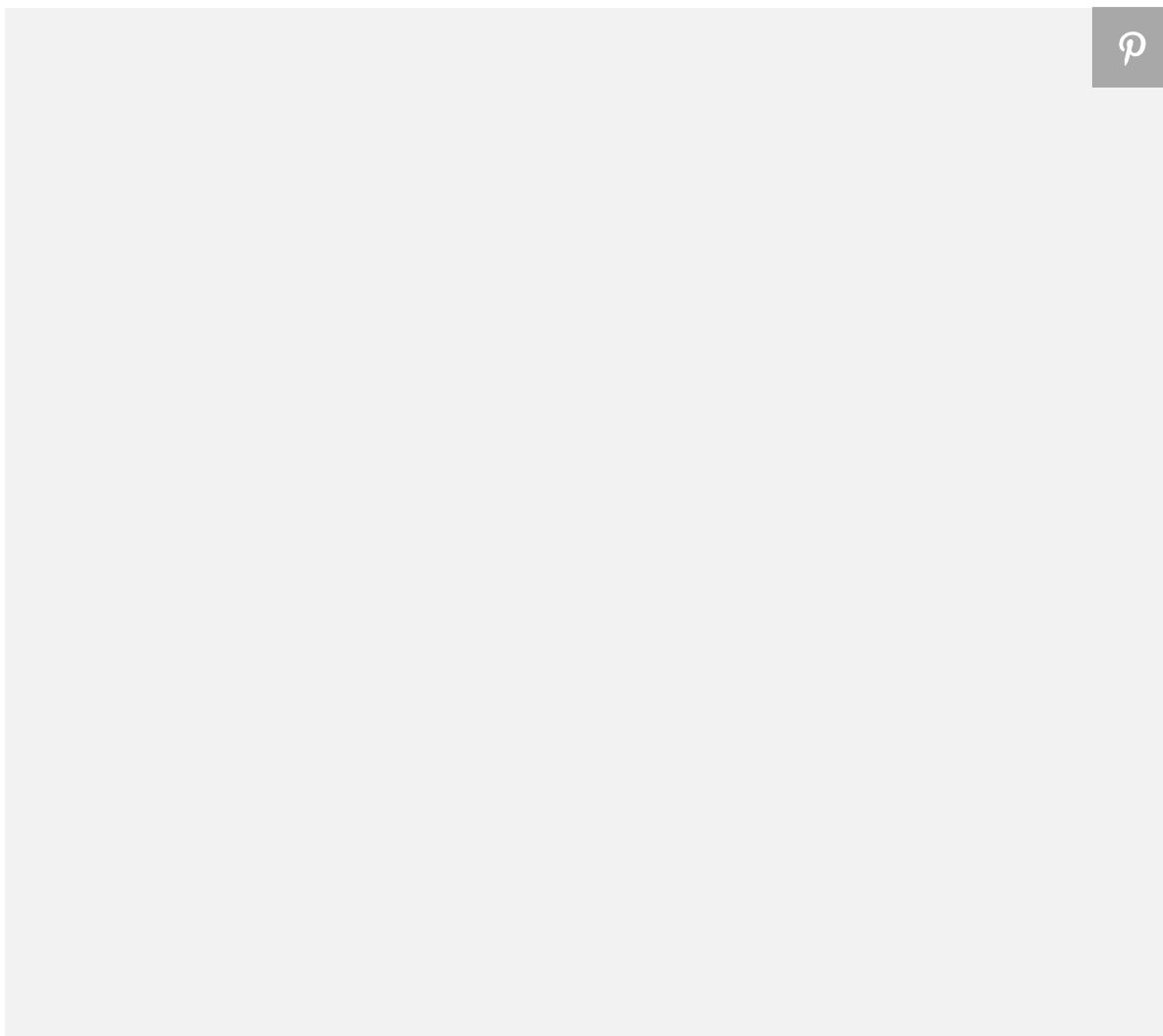
# I Went to a Nude Swingers Resort to Save My Marriage

After a blow to our relationship, exploring sex with other people helped solidify our commitment to each other.

By **Ali Wunderman**

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I was fully nude upside-down against the wall, trying my best to do a handstand while twerking. Hundreds of people surrounded me, watching as I shook my bare ass. At that moment, an important question came to mind: Where was my husband?

I was so distracted by the gorgeous women dancing alongside me, their open-handed spanks encouraging my dance moves, that I'd completely lost track of him. I scanned the adjacent pool overflowing with cheering nudists, trying to find and make eye contact with him in the crowd. I wanted to make sure he saw who his wife really was.

This kind of environment wasn't totally foreign to us. Though we remained in the closet from friends and family, we were seasoned non-monogamists with roots in the San Francisco BDSM scene, veterans of a long-term "throuple" relationship and a decade of private adventures in polyamory that was fun for us as a couple, and a great way for me to explore my bisexuality. Yet Michael and I didn't know what we were getting into when we booked a trip to [Hedonism II](#), an all-inclusive clothing-optional resort perched along a white sand beach in Negril, Jamaica during [Young Swingers Week](#). The event books out every room, reserving space exclusively for couples that are more or less under 45 years old, selling out months in advance every year. It's designed for those in the swinging or nudist lifestyles to have a place where they can be themselves without fear of judgment from others.

It seemed like our kind of fun, which is why we booked the trip for Michael's 31st birthday, but almost immediately after doing so, we entered couples counseling. Seemingly minor challenges in our relationship had been building up — none of which had anything to do with our nontraditional sex life.

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When we got married, I panicked. I never saw myself as a wife, and putting that ring on fundamentally shifted the world's relationship with my identity. Suddenly, I felt like everyone assumed that I was domestic, feminine, even straight. I reacted by deepening the

commitment to my independence. I began traveling more, working more, and doing anything I could to reaffirm my identity as an individual, rather than allowing myself to be defined by my relationship.

My absenteeism caused me to miss the fact that my husband had been lying to me about money for more than a year. The betrayal of honesty devastated me, especially because it took several weeks between realizing he was sitting on the big lie, to learning what the lie actually was. I know that his actions were rooted in his own shame, rather than a disrespect for or resentment of me, but after 13 years together, my heart was broken by the reality that we had reached a point in our relationship where we didn't trust each other.

And it was a lot to take in right after planning what would be our first vacation together in years. I considered canceling the trip altogether. Could we really engage in group sex, or sex with other partners, while he and I were on ice?

Yet the moment we stepped into the lobby of the resort, a bare-bosomed Mona Lisa gazing approvingly over the open-air entrance, the tension between us started to dissipate. And suddenly, instead of fearing that my husband and I would be unable to reach a point of trust that would allow us to engage sexually with others, I was energized by the idea that returning to our roots would help us be ourselves again.

The thing is, at a place like Hedo (as it's called by regulars), it's impossible not to be yourself. Between the packed daily pool parties where nudity is strictly enforced and the nightly themed events (that inevitably send revelers back to the pool), there's very little opportunity to hide behind a self-imposed facade, be it the literal cover that is clothing or trying to play it cool when swimming in a sea of naked bodies.

We didn't just need this trip for a long-overdue vacation; we needed to experience being surrounded by hundreds of other couples celebrating love as unique as ours and reminding us that it was worth returning to, worth embracing. Looking at everyone living and loving so freely, it made all the sense in the world why Michael couldn't share his financial woes with his wife: our marriage was built on a foundation of gradually-crumbling trust that started when our relationship opened, but we didn't. Staying in the closet and allowing shame to rule the way we expressed ourselves was killing us.

The feeling of being safe enough to leave all of our masks behind is what made me climb onto the stage at the pool party to twerk — for the other people at the resort, myself, and my husband. He watched from the crowd, and when we returned to our room I saw in the mirror on the ceiling that Michael was still looking at me. “I forgot you were such a slut,”

he remarked, heavily emphasizing the last word with lust on his breath. I was taken aback by his comment — not because I was offended, but because it meant he must have seen me dancing. He saw me. Being sexually adventurous was an aspect of our relationship that had gone untended for too long, but everything was starting to feel familiar again. We made use of those mirrored ceilings before heading to dinner, decked out in neon rave gear for the themed party that would follow.

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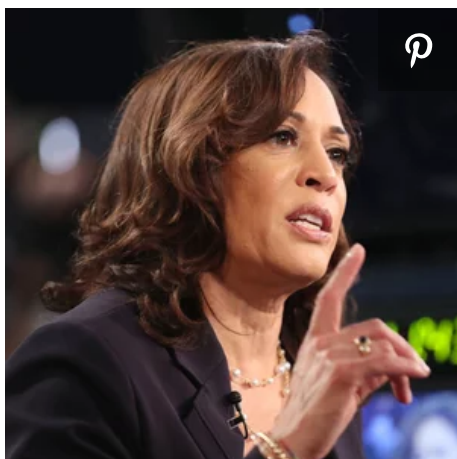
Our remaining three days were a whirlwind of poolside cocktails, casual sexual encounters, and midnight pizzas. Michael and I held hands as we hooked up with others, more affectionate than we'd been in years. Swinging at Hedo wasn't the solution to our problem; it was a celebration of the work we had done rebuilding trust in each other. Having sex with other people was a sign that our marriage was once again healthy after taking a serious hit. It's impossible for non-monogamy to function without trust, honesty, communication, and consent, and among our fellow swingers we discovered the benefits of being in an environment that emphasizes and facilitates all of the above. This exploration solidified our commitment to each other and allowed a new dynamic to flourish.

Spending a decade trying to protect our friends, family, and the general public from our non-monogamy, and my bisexuality, had been poisonous to the very core of our relationship. Financial problems merely exposed our larger issues around trust: we had built a marriage on the choice to not support each other in living our truth. That ended in Jamaica.

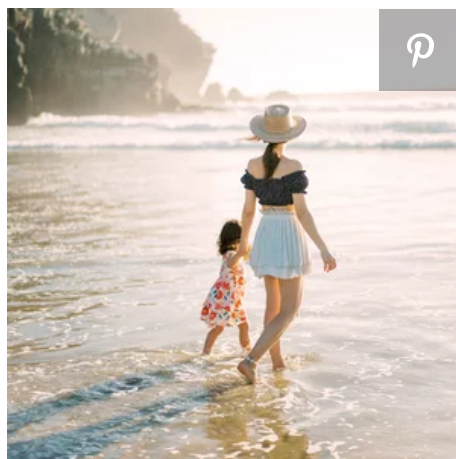
There was as much healing power in being able to say what we were thinking, instead of hiding in fear of judgment, as there was in making out with another woman's husband (and then her) in front of my own husband without having to justify it to others. These small actions combined to reveal how deeply we both had internalized the shame of not being monogamous, and in my case, of not being straight. It was in the throes of a late night ménage à cinq at the nude pool that we as a couple decided to stop making excuses for who we are, and in that instant we saw exactly just how durable, how solid our trust remained.

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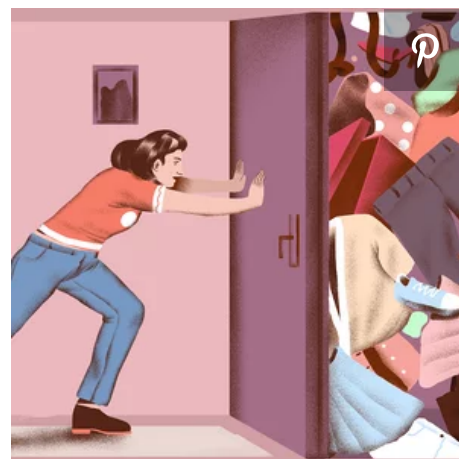
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