

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Devon Clement

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

Laura Boyle: Polyamorous people are not mentioning their sex lives to their kids any more than any other parent. Their kids are equally like, "Ew, Mom and Dad do what?" as any other teenager.

Welcome to *Parenthood Prep*, the only show that helps sleep-deprived parents and overwhelmed parents-to-be to successfully navigate those all-important early years with their baby, toddler, and child. If you are ready to provide the best care for your newborn, manage those toddler tantrums, and grow with your child, you're in the right place. Now here's your host, baby and parenting expert, Devon Clement.

Margaret Mason Tate: Hey everybody, welcome back to the *Parenthood Prep* podcast. My name is Margaret Mason Tate and I am filling in for Devon Clement this week. I'm so excited because with me today, I have Laura Boyle.

Laura Boyle is a familiar name to you because you have read about her in The Boston Globe. You have maybe read about her in Cosmopolitan when you're getting your nails done. You might have heard what she's been talking about on her podcast, Ready for Polyamory. There's also an accompanying blog.

And did I mention that there's also a book published in 2021? Oh, and then there's a second book published 2024. *Monogamy? In This Economy? Finances, Childbearing, and Other Practical Concerns of Polyamory*. I am so excited to have Laura Boyle on the podcast today. Hi Laura.

Laura Boyle: Hi, Margaret, thank you so much for having me.

Margaret Mason Tate: It's a long intro and I understand that, but I believe that everybody deserves their bonafides, and you have a whole lot of them.

Laura Boyle: Well, I appreciate you very much for listing out so many of my credits. You did miss the time that I was in The Economist saying that all polyamorous people have a scheduling kink, which my uncle saw and immediately clipped and sent to my parents in the mail.

Margaret Mason Tate: In the USPS, God love him. He bought a stamp for that.

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

Laura Boyle: Mhm. For sure.

Margaret Mason Tate: I wonder what stamp he used.

Laura Boyle: I don't remember to be honest, but I do remember my mother then immediately calling me.

Margaret Mason Tate: Absolutely. I love it. Well, so the reason that I'm interviewing you today, and specifically me and not Devon, is because I, like you, have myself been polyamorous since the early aughts. Something about that time of the season in the life really helped. I think a liberal arts education also helped, would you say?

Laura Boyle: Something was in the water, wasn't it?

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah, for real. But now, you know, it's been 108 years or something like that since then. And now we're both parents and navigating the kind of situations and scenarios that people who are not doing consensual non-monogamy or polyamory, they're not dealing with this stuff. And so today on the pod, I'd really love to discuss a couple of different things from pregnancy to, you know, the tweens. We both have 12-year-olds, I think, right?

Laura Boyle: We do. My son turned 12 last week, actually.

Margaret Mason Tate: Oh, man. Wow. Yeah, mine was March the 13th. Golly, Moses. It's a fine time to have a 12-year-old. I would like to start just by saying you were pregnant and polyamorous at the same time. Talk to me a little bit about what that looked like in your relationship structure at that time.

Laura Boyle: Well so, I do not recommend that people do pregnancy and polyamory exactly the way I did, because I did not have a planned pregnancy. I did not go into this with any of the like intention and deliberation that I apply to my relationships as a whole, especially today. My early 20s were not a time where I was anywhere near as deliberate as I am now.

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

And so, what had happened for me was that I had a failure of birth control and this meant that we very rapidly had to decide what I was doing about this pregnancy, what that meant to the relationships that I was in, and what it meant for how I was living in pretty rapid succession while I was in my first year of law school. I discovered this pregnancy in the September of my first year of law school. That combination of factors was not a fun time.

Margaret Mason Tate: No, 1L is not when you want to see the stick pop.

Laura Boyle: No, yeah, L1 is not a great time to be doing all of this. So I, and I gave birth a little premature in mid-April and was writing exams mid-May, five weeks postpartum. So like, just for an example of how that year went, even outside the relationships.

Within the relationships, my now ex-husband decided that he did not want to parent, and so that meant that we started moving into un-nesting and filing for divorce while I was pregnant, while I was in law school, not a great combination. My other partner decided that yes, he wanted to parent regardless of whose biological child this was.

And luckily, it turned out that the biology matched who wanted to parent. But there were pretty good odds that it wasn't going to, because based on just the math of like who I had been with how many times in the month where this IUD had failed, the math looked like it was going to be my ex-husband. So we had to wait for the test to come back to say one way or the other what the paternity of this child was. It was a very stressful time for me as a human being.

Margaret Mason Tate: Sure.

Laura Boyle: But in the end, we sort of figured this out, right? So my boyfriend, who had one other partner, was like, "I am happy to parent with you." My one other partner is interested in staying with me as I figure out these life transitions. I would love it if the two of you got to know each other better and figured out if you guys want to be like long-term figure out your lives together partners, even though you're not romantically involved.

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

If you are, we'll all do life together and figure out this family that you and I are going to have. So I was like, okay, this is a lot of big scary life transitions at once, but goddamn it, I'm 25 years old and I'm going to do it.

Margaret Mason Tate: So you stacked them all on top of each other. First year of law school, divorce, baby, paternity, relationship with the person who was choosing to parent with you, relationship with that person's other person.

Laura Boyle: Yep. We had met at a party once prior to me finding out that I was pregnant. And so then we were like, let's figure out whether or not we are compatible enough to like live in the same place, whether our values are compatible enough to raise a human together within nine months. It was a really accelerated timeline. I do not recommend that method to anyone, but sometimes life gives you an accelerated timeline in a way that you are not necessarily prepared for.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah. And dealing with prematurity. I missed one. I missed one of the stack.

Laura Boyle: Luckily, he was only like 35 and five. It was not like a horrible amount of prematurity. His lungs were fine, but enough that it was hairy, right?

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah. Indeed. Mine was seven weeks premature and it was not awesome.

Laura Boyle: Yeah, I'm so sorry.

Margaret Mason Tate: No, hey, buddy, we were in that together. In so many different parallels. It's really crazy how many of the same experiences we were experiencing down to the year and sometimes even down to the month. Absolutely bananas. So if we were going to recommend, so if we were going to take all of what you learned and then recommend, I don't want to say the opposite, but the opposite. What would the inverse of all of that look like?

Laura Boyle: Well so look, in the years since, I have met lots of other polyamorous parents. In the years since, I have had the luck, the privilege, the

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

excellent ability to work with folks within our community in a bunch of different capacities.

And one of them in recent years has been in a space of organizing and of coaching. And in that process, I've met lots of folks who are in polyamorous families, both in sort of dyad couple units and in larger units. And the thing that most often correlates with like long-term success of their relationships and their families is having been intentional about the way they formed those, right? So...

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah, the foundation really is a foundation.

Laura Boyle: Who would have thought, right? But not that folks don't make work in the long term, things that kind of fall together sometimes. B

ut people who approach things more intentionally, who really sort of check in on those core values things, whether it's to do with your finances, whether it's to do with what you kind of intend about child rearing in the long term, or how you intend to like build your life in terms of where you want to live, in terms of whether you want to stay in the same place in the long term, or what sorts of places you intend to move over time, having that kind of core even about whether or not you intend to add other people to your household long-term, right?

Because a lot of the time not getting clear on that sort of thing and finding out that one member of a three-person household is like, of course other people will move in with us over time and everyone else in the household is like, the fuck do you mean?

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah, who?

Laura Boyle: It's a big challenge, right? Because then that third person meets someone who they really vibe with and they're like, "Well, it's been like nine months and I really vibe with this person. Let's start talking about what timeline they can move in on." And everyone else is like, "The what? The whomst? No, sir," right? "No, ma'am. That's not a plan."

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

And so a lot of monogamous scripting that says, of course, if you're emotionally invested in someone, you will naturally do a whole relationship escalator with them. You will necessarily combine finances and move in with them and do all of these steps, doesn't apply in non-monogamy. And reaching a point where we're actually at peace with that, and we're actually comfortable with not doing some of those escalator steps with our partners who we're most deeply emotionally entangled with, becomes a really big challenge for people who are already entangled with folks who they're co-parenting with.

I think this is also a challenge for divorced monogamous parents sometimes because they go, "Oh, the obvious thing is that I will find someone who can be a stepparent to my children." But sometimes that's not actually what your dating life needs right now. What your dating life needs is someone who is emotionally safe for you and safe enough for your children, but not necessarily looking to be in that role for them.

Margaret Mason Tate: I cannot speak highly enough of the experience of dating people who that's not even on the table for. The relationship develops a completely unique kind of flavor that is inexplicable unless you're experiencing it, but highly recommend getting you some of that.

Laura Boyle: And being like, a person who might have some influence on your child. They will be a safe adult who is present, but they're not like trying to fill in that role because your child has parents, is actually a really valuable additional adult role.

Margaret Mason Tate: Fully agree. Undersung.

Laura Boyle: Yeah. And like the researcher Elizabeth Sheff talks about these additional adults in her book, *The Polyamorist Next Door*. She calls these additional bonds polyaffective bonds, the connections between like metas or between children and additional adults who aren't their parents. But when I was doing, I did a study of it's between four and five hundred people responded to me and the survey that I did, and then I did follow up interviews with, it was a hundred some odd of them.

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

And so folks like chatted with me on the phone, some of them got on FaceTime and walked me through their houses and chatted with me about what their polycules were like. The cutest were when like stay-at-home moms had their kids with them and like the children would steal the iPad and run away from them while mom was trying to tell me things. It was great. The experience of researching was amazing and I turned it into the book *Monogamy? In This Economy?*

And it really reinforced a lot of the stuff that Eli Sheff said in their research, but also it covered a lot of this stuff of the people who had the sort of least fraught metamour relationships and the least fraught relationships with people who didn't live in their homes who were in their polycule were people who were comfortable with those people having some kind of connection to their family, right? Who weren't like, oh, you need to be entirely outside of us and also you don't need to be one of us except when you're sleeping.

Like it's not just you're entirely our family, but there's no room for you to sleep here. It's you get to have your own role and we're actually comfortable with what that role is when it works. And I know that sounds like sort of automatically intuitive or really obvious or whatever, but in practice, that's really a hard balance to strike for a lot of people, I think.

Margaret Mason Tate: Well, and it behooves being articulated. It really behooves, like, I think it helps a lot to articulate these things because of course, having a myriad safe, close adults who are, you know, contributing different types of humor and media and, you know, energy and all different types of like material and immaterial resources.

Of course, that makes sense that we should have, you know, lots of those folks around. But actually articulating why and what it does for our relationships and specifically our kids' relationships to themselves, to us as parents, to each other, it matters. That's why I'm so glad you wrote the book.

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

Laura Boyle: And I think in some cases it also makes the network more resilient to change, too, right? When people have breakups, it gives more people who can help us and our kids mediate those or like traverse them.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah, so when I am speaking about polyamory in my own life, specifically the way that I do it, one of the very first responses from a lot of the more skeptical, I guess, people are, so then they've met this person and then what if you break up? I was like, "Well, we probably will. A lot of relationships end in breakups." It's all right. We can navigate that.

Laura Boyle: I mean, so first there is that argument that monogamous people break up all the time. Second, one of the most sort of important foundational relationships in a lot of kids' lives are one that disappear every year. It's their teachers. And I get that like teachers don't fully disappear off the face of the earth, but they become a much smaller role in children's lives after a year.

And so similarly, what we end up creating for our children in the way we have networks help us navigate this, is we take it from the person completely disappears out of the child's life to, our partners and our additional people, our friends can help us have the person sort of slowly fade out of our child's life. So long as the breakup isn't over something like a complete lack of safety, you can slow roll someone out of your kids' life instead of having them disappear overnight.

And also, like, the adults are in direct relationship with us. Often they are not so deeply embedded in a child's life that the child is like, "Oh my God, this adult." It's really that we're more often concerned about what if their children and our children are close. And so it's about figuring out how do we keep children in relationship to one another. And most of us actually have good scripts for that. Most of our kids have friends whose parents we don't like that much. We know how to do it.

Margaret Mason Tate: Absolutely. And listen, far be it for me to remove a good trampoline partner from the mix. You know, I would never. And so it is a lot easier to accommodate those, especially, I mean, the older that they get, the

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

more it's just a question of like dropping off and picking up. And, you know, anybody can do that in a civil and cordial way. I find that the breakups that I have in non-monogamy tend to be less fraught and a little bit easier to navigate. But I know that's a big catch-all and certainly not everybody's experience, but it is mine.

Laura Boyle: And I think a lot of this is just people's personalities and their choices, too. And so we can't mediate for that. If you're someone who had really dramatic breakups in monogamy, you may also have really dramatic breakups in non-monogamy. We do not change who you are just by changing your relationship style. So you know yourself best.

Margaret Mason Tate: So this is a bit of a gear switch, but I did want to talk about it because you write a lot about finance in your second book and I think that a lot of people want to hear about that. But I would love to gear it specifically towards pregnancy, postpartum, leave, you know, parental leave, who's doing what, who's living where. I would love to talk about your thoughts about the finances of an intentional pregnancy that we're like planning from the beginning. What are your thoughts there?

Laura Boyle: So in general, like with generally splitting finances in polyamory, deciding what items belong to who is the first step. And so if you're planning a pregnancy, similarly deciding who the pregnancy and the child belong to is step one, right? There's a whole section in my book about what makes someone a parent.

And while often people are having those conversations because they already have children and they're trying to navigate whether or not someone who's coming in is going to be taking on a parental role, you should also have those conversations when you're thinking of having new children. Who wants to parent this child? Who is taking on the costs of this new child?

If you're living in a household and not everyone wants to be a parent, which costs are now only falling on the parents of this child? Is it just an increased insurance cost? Is the insurance divided based on who's married to whom? And

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

is it the married couple who's having the child? If it's not, how are you dividing up percentage wise where that money is coming from?

And like, a lot of the time people default to using the legal system and using marriage or similar benefits to help either mitigate or place upon the people they want to place upon these costs, right? But sometimes you're already legally married and the legally married person is not the one who's taking on the costs. So what you end up doing is like, okay, well the legally married person is the one whose insurance cost is technically going up, but they're not the actual parent of this child.

So the person who is the actual parent of this child is going to pay the married couple back for the increase in cost of now their insurance is bigger. Or, oh, their insurance isn't going up because it was already a family plan because it was a married couple, but they're going to have this big cost of the hospital stay. So the parent is going to help pay them back for it. These are conversations you have to have ahead of the bill coming because if you wait until the bill comes, the level of argument that is going to be, I cannot even express.

Margaret Mason Tate: This is what people, I think a lot of time, you know, when people are having babies, they go to the hospital that like they just go to the hospital that they assume that they're supposed to go to without really realizing which choice you make here can be a matter of thousands and thousands of dollars.

Laura Boyle: Well, and I know sometimes you shop for your hospital because actually you shopped for your GYN or for your midwife and they're admitted at a particular hospital and you don't think about the hospital cost associated, you just think about where your person is admitted and you don't consider how the cost might be affected there. But those are always just things that as parents we should consider.

And then as polyamorous parents, thinking about if you're in a household all together, whether you're now subdividing household costs and deciding that some children's costs are not household costs or that parents are going to pay a

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

greater proportion of the household costs because now there are children associated. Some households do that, according to my survey, right?

A greater proportion of households do not do that and all the adults involved pay in equally. But some proportion do say like, "Hey, the people who chose to become parents are just paying a greater proportion of costs now, because kids are expensive and we use more electricity and more food and more this and more that. We have a bigger number of rooms in the house because you have kids who need their own rooms."

I found that's substantially less common. Mostly people either choose not to form one household or they choose to all consider themselves some degree of supporting these kids.

Margaret Mason Tate: If for no other reason than it's just an unbelievable amount of math. Like it's just...

Laura Boyle: It tends to be that like at the beginning of the year you decide what things are separate and it's usually that like the parents are paying the daycare bill and the parents are paying two thirds of the grocery bill, not one half, or whatever it is, right? If there are four of you, the parents are still paying two thirds, not one half, something like that.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah.

Laura Boyle: But like likewise, who is a parent can be, okay, is it the biological parents of this child? Is it the legal parents of this child? Because in some states, the presumed legal parent is the spouse of the mother, regardless of the biology of the child, and so you have to like file paperwork and potentially do a paternity test to prove that someone else is the father of the child, things like this. And so people might have gone through significant steps to make sure that children are associated with the correct parents or with as many of their parents as possible legally.

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah. Have you seen anything crop up like with the freshly born crowd, like with regard to pediatricians, having folks want to like all be in appointments and not be allowed? Have you run into any of that kind of thing?

Laura Boyle: So pediatricians' offices are mostly really easy. Like most pediatricians' offices have tons of extra lines on their forms for who else can have information released to them. Most pediatricians' offices just like want a single word explanation of who these additional people are.

And if you give parent or stepparent or guardian as the word next to the person, they don't give a shit. If you're in a really rural or really conservative area, they might want stepparent next to the thing, and they might only want mom and dad in the appointments when the kid is like freshly birthed, or they might only want mom and stepmom in the appointments when the kid is freshly birthed because they think that the moms are who's going to be doing care.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah.

Laura Boyle: Because there's a lot of bias toward who do we think will actually be bringing this kid to appointments?

Margaret Mason Tate: Yes.

Laura Boyle: And that is in our culture gendered care for the most part.

Margaret Mason Tate: Absolutely.

Laura Boyle: As much as it's unfair, that is what it is still.

Margaret Mason Tate: Well, and that leads me to like a totally different question, which is, you know, so Happy Family After, the company that Devon Clement, the host of this podcast, is the founder and CEO of, provides postpartum care for families in Philadelphia and New Jersey and New York City. And I would really appreciate it if you would back me up on something. I have a feeling that you'll back me up here. I'm just going to say it.

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

We get polyamorous families who have just brought home a baby who convinced themselves that they shouldn't need postpartum care because there's three of them or four of them or however many of them. And I think that is just not true and that if a baby comes into your house, you need help no matter who you are or how many of them there are.

Laura Boyle: I mean, everyone needs help postpartum, especially in our culture where most of us don't have a village, right? So if the company's purpose is to like take the space that used to be held by family members and friends who used to show up and be your village, then yes, they also need that. Three of you who have all not been sleeping still need help. There being three of you who are all not sleeping because all of you heard the baby crying and all of you maybe have an older child who you're trying to take care of at the same time, are still kind of a mess.

But three of you at the same time are better equipped than one or two of you, right? So when I brought my 12-year-old home, my partner and my meta were finishing renovations on the house that we moved into when he was four months old. So I was living with my mother while they were finishing the renovations on the house that at that point had like torn up floors.

Margaret Mason Tate: Oh gosh.

Laura Boyle: And so I had like my partner's help at night three nights a week and my mother's help the other four nights if she happened to wake up from the baby crying.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah.

Laura Boyle: And that was significantly harder than two and a half years later when our daughter was born and all three of us were in the same place even though we also had a toddler. It was just a very different experience. And so I sort of see the logic of the people who are like, well, there's three of us. It is easier. And it is slightly, but it's not you don't need care. It's maybe you're better

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

at prioritizing which care you need because one of you has slept a little better and can make the list.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yes.

Laura Boyle: Does that make sense?

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah. Absolutely. Absolutely, it does. I think that people do tend to underestimate how light they're going to be sleeping with a new baby regardless of how you're related to that baby. Like it's a human evolutionary instinct to be able to rouse, right?

And when you're constantly, and I'm talking week after week, experiencing that, having somebody who is going to do the laundry and the cooking and the, you know, colic rocking, some of those things really invaluable so that you can put out all of the other tiny fires that have cropped up and maybe even get some decent rest yourself.

Laura Boyle: Well, and especially when you may not get decent family leave. And like because I know in the years since we had our children, our state created a mandatory family leave option where if your business doesn't offer it, you can file for it from the state. But not everybody lives in Connecticut, not everybody has an option to file for family leave.

And so if you don't have a safe job where you can get family leave and still go back to your job, a lot of people may be back to work just a few weeks after. And so if you're already back to work and still not sleeping at night because certainly we were not sleeping at night for six months after each kid, at least, probably longer, but certainly for the first six months. And like that bit of help is necessary.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. And like, you know, living in an intergenerational home, I also did that for a long time. You know, they're incredible helpers and they don't wake up. They frequently do not wake up. I like to encourage people to understand that everybody could benefit from a helper

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

because it is a really cool change to bring about to your household, but it is a change, a huge change.

Laura Boyle: And I know lots of people continue dating while they're pregnant, or their partners continue dating while they're pregnant, and their metas want to be helpful, or their other partners want to be helpful, but they then get really in their head about what that help means, what the proximity of those people means, how those relationships are changing. And so the help feels like it has additional emotional strings attached for people.

And so a lot of the work I do in coaching with people is actually about navigating those emotional transitions along with the logistical transitions. Because like the logistical help can be good, but often times for the birthing person, it feels like it comes with a lot of expectation from every human involved, especially when the people are not people who have had their own children, right?

I don't know if you guys here at the podcast are familiar with Mina Dubin's book, *Mom Rage*, but when it's people who have not had their own children and you're going through that like soup of matrescence and of figuring out whether this deal you've been sold is actually what you're getting and there's all these expectations on you as a mother and on you as a person who's maintaining your house or not maintaining your house and these people are coming to help you, but it kind of feels like judgment at the same time.

Like I don't know, maybe not everybody was raised as Connecticut as I have been, but like there's a certain amount of why isn't my house the way it is, but people are walking into it.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah.

Laura Boyle: That the help didn't always feel like help, right?

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah, absolutely. Or we find that the help isn't really help. It's a thinly veiled surveillance.

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

Laura Boyle: Well, and for folks who are dealing with their metas there, is the help really help or is the help somebody else cuddling with my partner while neither of them do housework? It's the two of them cuddling with my baby and telling me to take a nap, but then no one is doing housework.

Margaret Mason Tate: Somebody's got to do something.

Laura Boyle: And like, you can feel very possessive of this baby you were carrying two weeks ago while all that is happening. And that's a story that I end up hearing in coaching over and over again from people, right? And none of that is ill-intentioned. All of that is well-intentioned, right?

Everybody deserves some rest and some care. And often that same meta who does the thing they observe and they feel like pit of their stomach weird about, that same meta will actually have made dinner and brought it over or like have cleaned something while they're there. But they also did this thing that was triggering. And so the relationship is very fraught at that moment.

Margaret Mason Tate: It can be, I mean, it's challenging for the most straightforward, simple math equation of a relationship. It's a strain for that. Add any other variables and, you know, we're starting to look at more difficulty. But I also think that it is also true that with those more intricate situations, that the preparation, any preparation that you do is like turbocharged.

Laura Boyle: It can really support people to have talked about it ahead of time to go, "Hey, these things may come up. I don't mean for it to play that way. I mean to be helpful. I mean to accept the help gracefully, even if I'm not going to be gracious at the moment." And to have that understanding with one another, especially if you have a decent relationship already.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah, trust that.

Laura Boyle: And like, to do one of the phrases in the relationship anarchist manifesto is trust is better. And that's one of those things that you have to try to apply for everyone, not just for your romantic relationships. The idea that the

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

people who give a shit about you care about you and are operating from a place of goodness because they care for you and not because they're trying to sneak something past you at any given time is important.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah. And that comes back to articulation. Like I think that I mean, of course that makes sense to everybody who hears it.

Laura Boyle: But when you're feeling it in the moment, it's a crash out waiting to happen.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah, and saying, okay, I forgot to remind myself. I'm reminding myself now, this person likes me, loves me, wants the best for me.

Laura Boyle: Yeah. And in that postpartum moment where your whole brain chemistry is still off and all the hormones are still raging, it can be really hard to feel that. Right? And like, I know I personally made a lot of choices in that time period where I was like, "Oh, I don't feel like myself yet. I don't want to meet new people. I want to focus on the things I'm focusing on until I feel like myself again."

And so I didn't start dating again for about a year and a half postpartum, because I just wanted to feel like I was fully myself by the time I started meeting new people. But I know lots of people who don't make that choice for a variety of reasons and all of it's equally valid.

Margaret Mason Tate: For sure. For the people who are going to continue to date throughout pregnancy and like immediately postpartum or whatever they choose, in what ways can they galvanize themselves in order to, I want to say, try to, you know, increase like success in those relationships, but I think success is a really fraught word. I guess what I mean is satisfaction.

Laura Boyle: I think being really aware of what you're looking for out of those interactions is important because sometimes people are dating for a good time right now and sometimes people are dating for a long-term connection. And

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

those two things require very different approaches. And so you need to approach it knowing what you want and being very clear about it.

And there are lots of people who are really open to short-term and like fling connections with pregnant people, in which case, all you need to do is be careful about your sexual health at that time, because like STIs can be passed to your babies, so be careful. But beyond that, have fun.

And like, fewer people are open to like long-term connections with people who are presently pregnant. But that doesn't mean you can't seek them. You just have to be really deliberate and clear about what your other connections are, what your bandwidth is, what you're willing to offer people.

Margaret Mason Tate: Well, I'd love to ask about bandwidth next because, so if you've had one child, every pregnancy and birth is different, but you kind of have an understanding of it. At least you've been to one rodeo, right? But before you've been to the big show, it's very challenging to accurately estimate your bandwidth and how it changes for a hot minute.

Laura Boyle: And saying like, I don't have a good idea of what it's going to look like after this point, but for while I'm pregnant, I have this kind of time to offer and I expect it's going to be lower. Are you willing to be around while I figure it out? And know that I might be a little bit of a like a ghost, a periscoper, a appearing and disappearing act postpartum. And are you willing to understand that immediately postpartum, the things that I'm into physically will be less available or very different for a while. And if the person isn't on board for those things, maybe they're not the one for you.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah. I mean I think that makes a lot of sense.

Laura Boyle: Because those are the things your long-term partner has to be on board for too, right? The one who's, you're having the baby with.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah, exactly.

Laura Boyle: So it's just having another one of those.

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

Margaret Mason Tate: I know that we both have our oldest kids are 12. And I wondered if, I come from the buckle of the Bible belt, Greenville, South Carolina. And I have been doing non-monogamous shenanigans since I was a freshman in high school, which was lascivious, to say the least. Anyway, a lot of the admonishment that I heard was kind of not, has not been recent, but was a long time ago. But a lot of it was what I heard was like, "What if your kid wanted a relationship like that? What if your kid wanted to...?"

So I asked because my child is in a non-monogamous dating relationship, whatever, you know, however you date at 12. But I wondered if you've got any experience with passing it down.

Laura Boyle: Well, my kid at 12 does not seem to have any interest in dating. So that has not been a thing for me. One of my meta's kids is non-monogamous and has been for a few years now. Well, two of my meta's kids, one of my metas has a large family and two of those five children are non-monogamous young adults now.

Margaret Mason Tate: That's a significant percentage though. That's 40% of the...

Laura Boyle: One of them is involved in our local kink scene and so we had to like have a sit down with her and be like, hey, let's divide up local events so that you are not at the same thing as dad and all his friends because that's awkward.

Margaret Mason Tate: Because that's not a good time for anybody here.

Laura Boyle: None of us want to do that. And so like after she came out to a couple of events that we were at, we were like, hey, let's have a sit down about this. We would love for you to have a safe time to explore. And I was like, look, I teach locally. I don't mind if you come to my classes, but I don't want to go to play events together. Let's not.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah, yeah. I mean, just having those really super clear boundaries. This is what I will do. This is what I'm not going to do. I mean, listen,

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

you're in the kink scene now where it's all about discussion, baby. That's way more, the kink is, is mostly discussion.

Laura Boyle: So much more chill than I would have been at 23 to having those conversations. So it was fine.

Margaret Mason Tate: So you and I grew up, we talk a lot about TV on this podcast. I don't know if you know. We relate a lot through media. And you know, you and I grew up in a time where it was a very common trope to see on television shows like a teenager or young adult walking in on their parents even, you know, kissing or necking or doing something like that and it being like deeply traumatizing and terrible. We are one generation away from that. And now we're like, "All right, get your Google calendar out, baby girl, because we are going to divide and conquer."

Laura Boyle: Exactly. Like I am fully of the generation of we just pretend that our parents did not do these things despite the fact that we are here and therefore proof of it, and despite the fact that science tells us that kinks are inheritable. So therefore, our parents must have been secretly freaky, because we didn't see them doing it in public, right? So we're a generation later and we're like, "Oh, we're trying to be sex positive and kind." So every time the children were exploring something and we noticed we were like, "Here are some resources, walk away from the teenagers, let them be."

And so 10 years later, one of them is in the scene and we're like, it is unpleasant to be at the same events though. So we're going to, we're going to tell you which ones we're going to divide and conquer through though because that's weird. And they're like, that is weird. Thank you.

Margaret Mason Tate: Love that. I love that. We have a really large event here called Frolicon. Are you familiar with Frolicon?

Laura Boyle: Yes.

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

Margaret Mason Tate: That is a situation where, you know, having to say like, "All right, here's my plans. This is the day that I'm doing a day pass, and this is my day pass and nobody go.

Laura Boyle: One that's like hotel con sized, I feel like they could go, "Okay, I'm going all weekend and so are you. Let's skip some classes. Let's pick a night each for the dungeon."

Margaret Mason Tate: Let's, you know, appropriately...

Laura Boyle: Coordinate.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah. Maybe we don't need to take like a family van.

Laura Boyle: Yeah, separate cars for sure.

Margaret Mason Tate: Maybe we travel separately. It's, we're not the Partridge family, guys. Let's deboard this bus.

Laura Boyle: Let's really though.

Margaret Mason Tate: So we've gone from pregnancy, we've gone through, you know, going to the pediatrician, we've gone through kids, you know, making friends with people that we're dating, the kids of the people that we're dating or the like metas that we have. We've talked about our kids being polyamorous themselves or not. I think that what I would love to, to end on would be what do you have to say, if you could say one thing to grandparents in polyamorous or multi-adult families, what would you tell grandparents?

Laura Boyle: I think I have two things. The first is that about six percent of US adults are currently in polyamorous relationships. This is not like a weird thing that only your child is doing. It is not your child and four people they know and no one else.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah, we're doing a whole podcast episode about it.

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

Laura Boyle: Well, sure, but like even beyond that, it's not like three people on podcasts across the internet either. This is not like a fringe internet situation. This is a significant portion of North American adults. There are as many people who are queer are polyamorous at this point. And the reason that's important is that as much as it is not a legally protected class, it is a significant number of people.

And if that many of us have been doing it for a pretty significant amount of time, the kids are okay. No one is messing up their children. Polyamorous people have regular boundaries just like everyone else. As much as I like get to talk laughingly about my friend subdividing his Google calendar with his kids. For the most part, polyamorous people are not mentioning their sex lives to their kids any more than any other parent. Their kids are equally like, "Ew, Mom and Dad do what?" as any other teenager.

We have regular ass boundaries. No one is being weird or more sexual than other people. Polyamory is not an outside of bounds kind of situation. It's just people in multiple relationships. It's not that hard to wrap your head around. Instead of boy loves girl, it's boy loves girl and other girl, or girl loves a couple of boys. It's not that hard.

Margaret Mason Tate: It's really not. And, you know, I like to try to very gently, but very firmly, you know, remind many of these folks like, listen, y'all used to know everybody's business, it just wasn't talked about. We just are willing to talk about it.

Laura Boyle: Yeah.

Margaret Mason Tate: Instead of Jim having to go never getting to stay at Betty's apartment, you know, everybody knows that Jim and Betty are dating, even though he's married to Marilyn.

Laura Boyle: And I do sometimes joke with my partner that part of why polyamory and non-monogamy are having such a moment in the sun is that we all have phones and have so much more of a surveillance state now than we

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

used to. Because some of it is just that even the people who would rather be lying can't at this point. And so they've had to like fess up and figure out what to do with themselves.

And the upside of that is that more people are learning to be decent communicators along the way. And while there is some messiness there, there is also a significant amount of personal growth that's happening for people.

Margaret Mason Tate: Well, and there's public health growth. There's fewer STI infections. The rate of teen pregnancy has plummeted. Like there has been a lot of really positive and obvious public health outcomes from this emergence and this being, you know, willingness to be discussed and to be seen. It's huge.

Laura Boyle: I mean, look, we've been working on lowering the teen pregnancy rate since the 80s, but don't worry, the current administration is going to try to get it back up.

Margaret Mason Tate: They sure are. I have seen a couple of different, you know, you and I are on the same platforms, right? We're on threads, we're on Instagram, we're on TikTok, we're on a lot of different things. And I don't know if you saw this same thing, but I'd be willing to bet the house that you did. In one day, I saw four different influencers discussing why they, not even why they believed, but just that they believed that our age women being on birth control then contributed to a higher rate of IVF conception.

Laura Boyle: Mhm. Look, I...

Margaret Mason Tate: Almost the same script for every video.

Laura Boyle: It's between that and their Fox News bits about how the birth rate being down age 15 to 19 is a problem, I am exhausted and being a modern woman is tiring. But we keep doing it every day.

Margaret Mason Tate: We soldier on. And I think that doing life the way that we're doing it is a particularly egalitarian way to do it if you're doing it right. And there's a lot to be said for that. We really like that over here on the podcast.

Ep #91: Polyamorous Parenting: Pregnancy, Postpartum, & Family Life with Laura Boyle

Laura Boyle: And if you're trying to be more egalitarian, the number one reason that people end relationships that are cohabitating, whether you're monogamous or polyamorous, is over the division of household labor. So keep going for it, ladies. You will eventually find good ones.

Margaret Mason Tate: Yeah, absolutely, you will. Absolutely, you will. I know that I did. Listen, I have had such a wonderful time talking to you, Laura Boyle from Ready for Polyamory.

If anybody is listening and is themselves practicing consensual non-monogamy and or polyamory, and is looking to welcome a baby, but would like to have some of that good old-fashioned intention that we have been talking about and a vocabulary for the dialogue that's going to be necessary with your providers, with your partners and metas, with, you know, your neighbors and the school teachers, etc. I would love for people to be in touch with Laura Boyle. We will put the way to do that in the show notes.

Laura Boyle: Thanks so much.

Margaret Mason Tate: Wonderful. Laura, it's been great talking to you and I hope that you have an exceptional day. Everybody read *Monogamy? In this Economy?* immediately.

To be sure you never miss an episode, be sure to follow the show in your favorite podcast app. We'd also love to connect with you on social media. You can find us on Instagram @happyfamilyafter or at our website HappyFamilyAfter.com. On our website you can also leave us a voicemail with any questions or thoughts you might have, and you can roast your baby. Talk to you soon.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of *Parenthood Prep*. If you want to learn more about the services Devon offers, as well as access her free monthly newborn care webinars, head on over to www.HappyFamilyAfter.com.