

## **Voluntary Plurality, A Disclaimer**

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**Written by:** Critical (Interstellar System)

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### **Content Warnings:**

- Mentions and discussion of abuse.
  - Mentions and discussion of syscourse.
  - Mentions and discussion of stigma around plurality.
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This was originally a [response to this post](#), but it derailed a little so I've split it off into its own and expanded it.

Creating headmates, becoming a system, becoming plural--if these things interest you, absolutely awesome! It's always great to see people interested in plurality, and often making a system can come with a lot of benefits depending on why you do it. It can be a very, very rewarding experience and hopefully if you do decide to be plural, yours will be too! But there's a lot of things related to creating a system that aren't talked about--the parts that might not be so fun, the risks, and the things you should maybe have a think about before committing to it.

As a disclaimer, this isn't to sit on a high horse and tell people when to and when to not be plural. In the end, you decide what happens in your own brain, and this post is our own opinion! But these things are rarely talked about from what we've seen, and we've seen a lot of systems struggle more than they would've otherwise if they thought a bit harder beforehand. We wanted there to be a resource to explain a lot of those common issues from our own perspective, to at least make people think.

This will sound largely negative because of that because we are focusing on risks, and of course not all systems have any internal issues at all either! Though considering what being plural might come with as a package-deal before deciding to become a system yourself is important before making those decisions.

# Why do you want to be plural?

The first question to consider is pretty simple: why? There's plenty of reasons, and not many are harmful across the board, but some carry more risks and need a bit more thought than others. Have a think about why this is appealing to you--do you want friends? A partner? For fun? To share your responsibilities with someone? How will being plural contribute to that?

Thinking about these things in-depth can help you figure out weighing the risks to the benefits and making the decision to (or not to) become plural. What do you want to get out of it, what are you willing to give up, is it okay if it doesn't go how you planned?

## Becoming plural for romantic/sexual partners?

This is going to be a long section, because it's such a loaded topic. But.. If you want to be plural to get a partner, the most important thing in our opinion to remember is that your headmate will be a fully fledged person, with as much agency and complex emotions as any singlet. They can like you, dislike you, be romantically interested, hate you. Headmates of any kind aren't objects or your personal fantasy. This is important to remember for any reason to become plural.

You *cannot* create or contact a headmate with the *expectation* that they will become your partner. You can have hopes, you can form relationships with your headmates if it happens naturally between you, but in the end, you will need to be understanding and okay with the fact that they may not reciprocate. It can be amazing to have in-system relationships, we have a lot personally! They can be great in ways so different and unique from relationships with those in other bodies, but you still need to approach them with the same care you'd approach other relationships with.

This means accepting them as a part of your life and as your headmate even if your relationship doesn't work out, or they never fall for you in the first place. You can't force a singlet to date you, and it's not okay to force a headmate to either. Like singlets, you can't know what direction your relationship may steer in until it happens. You meet someone, you talk, and things develop in one way or another naturally--things just can't be forced. And like with singlets, you need to be aware that you will 1000% need to respect their boundaries, and open to communication about them.

You also need to understand that even if they're a soulbond of your favourite character, or a tulpa you made, or another headmate you made specifically to be what you want... They can change over time, so much so that you might even end up disliking them. You need to be open to that idea and not try to force them to be who you wanted them to be--people change and develop over time, headmates are no different. Even if you do end up not getting along, you are the one who has decided to share your body and life, so you have to make peace with that possibility. Plurality isn't something you can usually ethically undo (unless your whole system

agrees, outside of going no-contact with day-trippers) if you don't like the people you made, you have to live with them.

Honestly we'd advise almost entirely against becoming a system for the intent of creating a romantic relationship with your headmate. Historically there's been issues, especially in the tulpa community, where headmates are created for the express purpose of being a partner, and that has *huge* ethical issues around it and develops into further problems. Creating a sentient being specifically to be a romantic or sexual partner to yourself and holding that as a strict expectation for them is objectifying at absolute *best*. You can't do that to a singlet, you shouldn't do it to a headmate. Abuse against headmates *is* real--if it would be abuse to do to a singlet, it is also abuse to do to a headmate.

But if you are *entirely, wholly okay* with the possibility that your headmate may just be a friend or not even like you at all, and you're still willing to accommodate them once they exist in your body and treat them with respect and equality... You can get a headmate with those romantic hopes in mind, as long as it doesn't affect any other way you treat them.

## **Becoming plural for internal friends?**

Honestly.. Pretty good reason and pretty common! You still need to keep the above points in mind, but focused around friendship instead. They are people, they might not end up being your friends, and you need to understand that you can't force them to fit your idea of them once you've made them real.

Things might be okay for a while, then they might get rocky. Alternatively, things might start out horribly rough but end up with you being close later in life. Be open to all these possibilities. It's just like any friendship with a singlet--there can be ups and downs, there might be breaks, there might be things you disagree on fundamentally... And you need to be aware of those possibilities.

## **Becoming plural for fun?**

Plurality can absolutely be a fun experience! The process of making/contacting your headmates, then getting to know them and going about life together can be so rewarding. Once again though, you need to be open to the idea that it may not *always* be fun. You might argue, your headmates might have a falling out with you, you might disagree on things all the time.

You need to be aware of those things and be ready to make compromises, respect them, and treat things seriously sometimes too. Some created systems never have any internal issues ever, which is great! But before you start the process, you need to be aware that you might need the skills to compromise, resolve possible conflicts, and make plans that are good for everyone.

## **Becoming plural to share responsibilities?**

Another pretty complicated one, but it all boils down to the same sort of thing: you need to be okay with the idea that your headmates might not help at all, and that you cannot force them to bend to your will. It can be amazing to work as a team to tackle homework, work, socialising, chores, and other daily life struggles! Sometimes, because headmates can be just as complex as singlets, there might be times where no one can cooperate and you have more of a frustrating "my roommate never cleans up after themselves" situation than a nice neat schedule you all follow together.

Another ethical issue that at least used to be common around tulpa communities is creating a headmate to do all your chores, responsibilities and work for you, sometimes to the point of making a headmate just so you never have to front again. This is another thing that *is* abuse, objectifying, and a reason you shouldn't make a headmate. These things can happen naturally, some headmates love working and cleaning, but you should *not* create a whole living being with the intent to have them work for you while you just front to have fun, or don't front at all.

## Do you understand what a headmate is, and what that really *means*?

Of course, if you're looking into this, you know the concept of headmates. They're people who share your body/brain who might be able to control the body and hang out with you! But sometimes, even though a lot of people understand as a concept that headmates are alive and can be as complex as singlets, people don't realise what that can *mean*. Not all of these are always applicable, but some things to think of:

- Your headmate might disagree with you on many things.
- Your headmate might like and buy different foods, clothes, etc.
- Your headmate might have different hobbies and want to have some money to spend on them.
- Your headmate might want to front and control the body. Sometimes, they might want more front time than you're comfortable with giving and you'll need to negotiate.
- Your headmate might want their own social media accounts, their own social circles, their own friends and partner(s).
- Your headmate might use your things in the front--eat your food, play your games, use your makeup, draw in your sketchbooks, take photos on your phone, etc.
- You might argue with them.
- You might not like each other too much, but you're stuck in the same body and have to navigate that without harming each other.
- They might be romantically interested in a person different to someone you like, and you'll have to navigate that together and with the other people involved.
- Your headmate might have times where they don't want to be bothered or spoken to.
- Your headmate may be unable to give you much or any privacy, for example if you're constantly confronting or they're stuck being co-conscious.

- Your headmate might have boundaries that are hard to accommodate or respect.
- Your headmate might have a disability you need to accommodate, or triggers you need to take note of.
- Your headmate may do, think, feel and want anything that a singlet you've never met before might. This includes things you don't like, things you want to keep to yourself, and things you do like.

You need to be aware of these possibilities and more, and know that you still want to be plural regardless. The skills to navigate any friendship or social situation apply to headmates too--conflict resolution, how to compromise, how to make decisions as a team, how to accommodate others' needs without sacrificing your own.. Those are all so important when you're sharing your whole foreseeable future with someone. And it likely *is* your foreseeable future, being plural can often be a lifelong commitment.

As an added note, this isn't always the case, but persecutors are also possibilities in any type of system. Disordered, nondisordered, traumagenic, endogenic--it doesn't matter. Sometimes, you may get a headmate who acts harmfully, toward you or the body or your friends. And even in that case, you need to find ways to cope and deal with the situations that might present. *Without* resorting to abusing that headmate, as is so common in plural spaces.

Often persecutors are treated as some sort of public spectacle to harass and abuse, but this quite literally makes it worse for everyone involved. "Hurting them back" often results in more aggravation and further issues. You *need* to have the skills to navigate and manage potential severe conflicts internally.

In a lot of cases, headmates tend to become persecutors *because* they've been mistreated and neglected or treated as if they're inherently lesser than the host in the first place. You need to treat your headmates like full, real people, no matter *what*.

Headmates can be kind and loving, and they also might be rude, cruel or aggressive, and you won't know what they're like until you meet them--just like any singlet. You need to know before you make a system that you can't always just "get rid of" them, walk away or block them if things go wrong, because you literally share a body and brain (and in the cases of day-trippers who you can cut contact with, you need to be willing to do so). You will need ways and supports in place to manage in case things go badly.

## **Are you okay with sharing your life?**

This was touched on in the last part, but we're expanding upon it here. You, someone who has brought a person into reality to share your life, need to at least be understanding of the concept that your headmate might have differing life goals than you. It's hard to navigate and complicated when it happens, but at least finding a compromise is key.

It's likely to feel unfair to your headmate if you make all the life decisions, don't involve them in the process, without a chance to have their own goals and life path. And this can lead to a lot of conflict! After all, you created this person and they're likely to want *something* at some point. We've known many systems who have created headmates just to "talk to occasionally when I'm bored", and those headmates often get frustrated and feel isolated and objectified because they aren't allowed any say and aren't allowed to live their own lives.

Letting your headmates have their own hobbies, letting them have input or coming to decisions together about your career or education, helping them with their own life goals while still aiming for yours--these can all be good compromises to not being able to lead fully separate lives! Though this is a lot to compromise on for a lot of people, so it needs to be taken into account that sometimes, your goals won't line up and you'll need a middleground.

## Do you understand the stigma?

There's a lot of weight that being plural can hold. Movies like Split affect primarily CDD systems, but these things that portray being more-than-one as something dangerous like that can and do affect people's idea of plurality as a whole. People around you might not understand, including those close to you. Particularly being a created system can come with extra infighting from syscourse as a whole.

Do you know who you'll be comfortable telling? Would you be able to cope with not being accepted? Do you want to share? What if your headmate wants to share, maybe because they don't want to pretend to be you? Those are some things to think about regarding the stigma of it all.

Letting your whole life be dictated by avoiding being anywhere close to something stigmatised plays into a lot of ways people get negative biases against certain groups, so we encourage you to avoid getting too deep into "avoid at all costs" as a mindset. It's not often very helpful to think that way either. But at least considering that there *is* stigma that exists, what it is, what it means, and how you'll navigate it before committing to being plural is a good idea.

## So, In The End...

Hopefully this provides at least a little insight into potential struggles with plurality. Truly we've seen enough headmates be harmed in our time by people who wanted to make a system and weren't ready to accept what headmates being full, other people means. Hopefully, thinking about these things can prepare some potential to-be systems for what plurality might mean for them. Hopefully you can think about ways you'd solve problems beforehand, or learn a little about how to cooperate with people you might not like, or learn ways to compromise on things that may be important for multiple people.

If you read through this and are having second thoughts, that's okay. If you still want to be plural but are worried, think on it a little more, maybe brainstorm ways you could cope with potential issues, think about solutions, ask the community for ideas even! You can still prepare yourself to become plural if you don't feel you have the capacity as you are right now, it's perfectly okay to be unsure. Take your time, you have plenty of it.

As stated in the beginning, this isn't meant to be a "don't become plural ever" post, it's a disclaimer, a thing to consider before committing. Headmates and originals/cores alike are hurt by quick decisions all too often and we want to encourage people to just think a little bit more, to hopefully minimize harm and make plurality overall a more enjoyable experience for those looking to become systems.