

What is Bisexuality?

“Bisexuality” is sexual/affectional attraction to members of all sexes. As with all sexuality, we may speak in terms of a person’s potential, identity, feelings and sexual expression. “A bisexual” is a person for whom bisexuality is an important part of their experience or identity. “Bisexual” as an adjective may refer to either.

Myths and Misconceptions

As a group, bisexual people are diverse, not fitting a single “type.” As such, many of the common images people have of bisexuality are sweeping generalizations which are often mutually contradictory. Others are just blatantly false. Here is a categorized list of some myths and a discussion of the realities of bisexuality.

Bisexuality Does Not Exist

Everyone is bisexual...Nobody is bisexual.
Or

Bisexuality is not a valid sexual identity.
Bisexuals are...confused...haven’t come out yet...are sitting on the fence...
Bisexuals are denying that they are...
really heterosexual...really homosexual.

It is true that for some people exploring their sexual identity, “bisexual” is a temporary label. However, many people have a deep, lasting sense of themselves as bisexuals. Bisexuals are not “mixed up” gays or straights, or simply “half and half”. Others who are uncomfortable with the idea of bisexuality should not confuse their feelings with ours!

The Only True Bisexuals are People Equally Attracted to All Sexes

Bisexuals differ in the relative weight they put on their feelings towards a given sex. Also, some say they get the same things from relationships with any sex, while others say the nature of their feelings differ.

Bisexuals Cannot Have Good Relationships

Bisexuals...are “promiscuous”...have many sexual partners...will have sex with anyone...can’t form stable relationships.
Bisexual people can feel significant sexual attraction or affection for members of all sexes. This doesn’t mean we must have sex with more than one person at the same time. Various bisexuals practice celibacy, life-time monogamy, serial monogamy, “open” relationships, poly-fidelity and “one-night stands.” (As do lesbians, gay men, and heterosexuals.) The relative merits of these kinds of relationships are a distinct question from bisexuality. Various values, such as trust and stability, can be embodied in more than one model of relationship. Some of these stereotypes may arise because bisexuals in a long-term relationships are “invisible” unless they make a deliberate point of “coming out” as bisexual.

Bisexuals Cause AIDS

Bisexuals are spreading AIDS...
to the heterosexual population.
to the lesbian community.

Unsafe sexual practices and needle sharing – behavior, not a “risk group” – that spread AIDS. People who are self-aware and educated about AIDS pose no special risk.

Name Calling

Bisexuals...have no moral values... are immature...are unreliable...are cop-outs politically.

Crossing the Lines: Bisexuality as a Threat

Some people in both the heterosexual and the homosexual communities see the blurring of boundaries as a threat. Conventionally, “we” (heterosexuals) are normal people and “they” (homosexuals, etc) are sexual deviants with no middle ground. Heterosexism is a major force for polarizing society, and heterosexuals often feel safe because they think of homosexuals as being completely different from themselves.

Gay men or lesbians may have put a lot of effort into establishing an identity or community, or may be distancing themselves from past unpleasant heterosexual experiences. Bisexuality does not fit with separatism. Bisexuality seems to weaken the political argument that gay men and lesbians “don’t have a choice”. People may see bisexuality as calling their own sexuality into question.

Bisexuals are Strange, Exotic People

While it is not true that everyone is bisexual, there is no sharp dividing line in sexual (or other) behavior between self-identified bisexuals and the gay/lesbian or straight communities. People with similar sexual histories identify differently. Human sexuality is complex and multi-dimensional. Let us respect each other’s choices and not put people into “boxes”.

All Bisexuals Make Sweeping Generalizations!

This pamphlet is an attempt to generalize about bisexuality, however, “your mileage may vary.” Bisexuals are individuals, and each person is different.

Bisexuals face stereotyping and exclusion, both from lesbians and gay men and from straight people.

While “bisexual” may be a temporary state or label for some people exploring their sexuality, for others, it is a lasting identity. Saying either “everyone is bisexual” or “nobody is bisexual” denies some people’s experience and makes “bisexual” a meaningless distinction.

Being bisexual doesn’t imply one is (or can choose to be) sexually attracted to everyone. Erotic feeling is idiosyncratic, with urges as diverse as desires for “tall brunettes” or for “non-smoking politically-active vegetarians.” Being unconventional does not mean one has no morality, values or standards.

An integrated bisexual identity can have qualities beyond a simplistic “half and half” mix of gay and straight sensibility.

We question any ethic that says exclusive heterosexuals or homosexuals “were made that way”, but condemns bisexuals for making the “wrong choice.” To many bisexuals, this “choice” is like asking “would you like to cut off your left hand or your right hand?”

Come Out, Come Out, Wherever You Are!

Or

Who was that Masked Man?

There are different kinds of closets, passing, and disclosure.

Bisexuals share with gay men and lesbians the experiences of living with a heterosexist society and “coming out of the closet.” Yet, to avoid stigma in the gay/lesbian communities they may find themselves in a second “closet” where they hide their bisexuality.

Bisexuals are not all equally visible. A socially experienced bisexual may blend into both communities unless they make an effort to be “out.” Almost nowhere is being bisexual the “norm.” Thus, it is hard to convey by subtle hints that one is bisexual. Even if one wants to “tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth”, this is a longer story than average.

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Myths About Bisexuality



The ways people can experience sexuality form a multidimensional continuum. “Heterosexuality” and “homosexuality” are not islands, but regions with fuzzy edges which overlap in “bisexuality”. Different people would draw their erotic potential as regions of different shapes on such a map. Some report more flexibility or “choice” than others. Over time, some people change, uncovering new areas or shifting in emphasis. There are no sharp lines around these regions of experience. People whose life stories seem similar, identify themselves differently. This raises political questions. Gay and straight sexuality are not equally valued, and some people tell others what they should feel and how they must “choose”. We want people to respect each person’s self-understanding, rather than making rules for who is (or should be “heterosexual”, “homosexual”, or “bisexual”).

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