

# UNDERSTANDING SEXUALITY



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following information has been designed as a starting point for those who wish to know more about and understand the diversity of sexuality.

Sexuality is a highly individual experience, and the information presented here is intended simply as a guide.

Furthermore, sexuality is constantly expanding and being explored from different theories and points of view. As such, this information may not fully conceptualise the depth or true nature of certain areas of sexuality and attraction. Instead, it is designed to stimulate and motivate others into finding out more about the diversity of sexuality in themselves and others.

## THE NATURE OF SEXUALITY

Sexuality is more than just who you have sex with; it encompasses feelings and attraction on different levels that each of us experience differently.

There are many different types of attraction and they manifest differently for each person.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER ATTRACTION WHEN TALKING ABOUT SEXUALITY?

It is important to consider attraction when considering sexuality as it takes the emphasis away from who we have sex with and what we feel for others.

## WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF ATTRACTION?

Attraction can be felt in a multitude of different ways. Here are some examples of different sorts of attraction.

**Romantic** – Finding someone desirable on a relationship or romantic level.

**Sexual** – Finding an individual sexually arousing/appealing and the desire to be sexually involved with them.

**Physical** – Finding physical features of another aesthetically appealing.

**Intellectual** – Finding someone's intelligence attractive, with the desire to engage intellectually with them.

**Emotional** – Finding someone's personality attractive, with the desire to engage with them on a personal level.

**Spiritual** – Finding someone's spirituality or faith attractive and the desire to engage with them on a spiritual level.

# IS EACH TYPE OF ATTRACTION FELT THE SAME WAY?

Everyone feels attraction differently. The same person may find that they experience attraction differently at different times in their lives, or with different people.

Emotional attraction may not develop until you start to get to know someone after a period of time. While some people experience physical and sexual attraction at first sight, others do not. Still others may find that their experiences change with time, or in different relationships.

We all experience attraction for others differently, it does not mean that there is anything 'wrong' or 'broken' with us, just that we are unique.

## THANK YOU

SHOC would like to acknowledge and thank the work of the UQU Queer Collective in helping produce this and other resources found on the Gender & Sexuality page.

# SOME TERMS USED TO DESCRIBE SEXUALITY

Here is a small list of possible terms that someone could use to describe or define their sexuality. There are more that have not been listed as well.

## *Heterosexual* –

Men who are attracted to women, and women who are attracted to men.

The word “straight” is also used.

## *Heteroflexible* –

Someone who is heterosexual and open to engaging in sexual activity with others of the same gender, such as having a threesome.

## *Queer* –

Originally, this word was used in a derogatory context. The term has been reclaimed as an umbrella term to describe anyone who is not heterosexual. The term queer celebrates our identity on the margins, highlighting the importance of “queering” societal norms.

Although the term queer is widely used by LGBTIQ youth, its history as a slur means that others prefer not to use it.

**Gay** - A man who is attracted to other men.

‘Gay’ has also been used as an umbrella term for anyone who is attracted to someone of their own gender, although in most contexts it is better to use “queer” or “LGBTIQ.”

**Lesbian** – A woman who is attracted to other women.

**Bisexual** – someone who is attracted both to people of the same gender as their own and people of a different gender to their own.

## *Pansexual* –

Someone who is attracted to people regardless of their gender. They may describe themselves as attracted to the physical features or personalities of others, rather than being limited by gender.

This term originated following debates within the bisexual

## IMPORTANT

In understanding sexuality and attraction, it is important to be aware that labels do not define anyone; each of us is free to be ourselves and we all experience attraction differently.

Be aware of stereotypes and the influence that they have on yourself and others around. By choosing not to treat others based off stereotypes, you will find that you get to know some amazing individuals who will add a lot of meaning to your life.

community about how to include attraction to non-binary people within the terminology. The term pansexual was introduced to describe people who experience attraction to all genders. The term bisexual has since come to be recognised as referring to attraction to the same and other genders.

### *Skoliosexual –*

Someone who is attracted to non-binary people. (See our understanding gender article for more details).

### *Asexual –*

Someone who feels none or very little sexual attraction to others. Asexual is frequently shortened to “ace.”

They may be romantically, intellectually or emotionally attracted to others. Asexual people may have sexual relationships with their partners, but may do so for other reasons than sexual desire.

### *Allosexual –*

Coined by the asexual community to describe people who are not asexual and to reflect the continuum of sexual desire.

### *Demisexual –*

People who develop attraction to others after a period of time once a personal connection is established.

### *Aromantic –*

Someone who feels none or little romantic attraction to others. They may be sexually attracted to others and may engage in sexual activity.

# FAQs

**Q: This is all just too confusing. Why can't we all be normal?**

**A:** Diversity IS normal. As human beings, we are an incredibly diverse bunch. We are all different, and special in those differences.

**Q: I think I might be asexual, is that normal?**

**A:** Yes. We are all different, and so is how we experience attraction. To not desire someone sexually is really normal, the same way that we may not desire to have someone pick our nose on our behalf.

**Q: I keep seeing the word 'heteronormativity' around. What does that mean?**

**A:** Heteronormativity is the assumption that everyone is heterosexual. This assumption is permeates our society, education system, media, laws and culture.

**Q: What does it mean to be polyamorous? Isn't it just cheating?**

**A:** Polyamory is the practice, desire or acceptance of intimate relationships that are not exclusive, with the knowledge and consent of everyone involved.

Poly relationships take a lot of open communication and negotiation to work well, but they can be incredibly rewarding for the people involved.

Cheating is about breaking the agreed upon rules of your relationship. Poly relationships are different

from cheating because you and your partners agree on rules of your relationship that allow you to see other people.

**Q: So are there any rules to poly relationships then?**

**A:** Yes! You and your partners should negotiate about what boundaries will make you feel safe. Some examples are:

- Agreeing to always have safer sex
- Agreeing on who is off limits (eg: their friends, your ex)

**Q: Isn't someone's sexuality determined by their gender?**

**A:** No. Someone's gender identity and sexuality are not determined by each other.

**Q: Aren't all gay men effeminate and lesbian women butch?**

**A:** These are stereotypes. Remember that someone's sexuality does not dictate how they should look, act or what interests they may have. Our sexuality and our gender identity are different things..

**Q: What causes homosexuality?**

**A:** No one really knows. All we can say is that people have loved people of the same gender for most of recorded history, although it's come under many labels.

**Q: Why didn't you mention 'sexual preference' or 'sexual orientation'?**

**A:** These terms aren't used anymore. Sexual preference implies that it is a choice, while sexual orientation implies something rigid and unchanging.

**Q: Do gay people influence others to be gay?**

**A:** No, sexuality is not contagious; you cannot catch it from anyone. If so, all the LGBTIQ people raised by straight parents, taught by straight teachers and subjected to heterosexual propaganda in the media would be straight.

## REFERENCES

The information presented in this resource has been accumulated from a variety of different sources. SHOC claims no copy right or ownership of the material in this resource. Additionally, information has been gained from various personal blogs on Tumblr, Reddit and Youtube, which we do not have to space to acknowledge here.

[lgbtq.unc.edu](http://lgbtq.unc.edu)

[au.reachout.com/what-is-sexuality](http://au.reachout.com/what-is-sexuality)

[www.glaad.org](http://www.glaad.org)

[www.asexuality.org/en](http://www.asexuality.org/en)

[www.advocatesforyouth.org](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org)

[minus18.org.au](http://minus18.org.au)



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