
Bisexuality

Summary

- Bisexuals can experience discrimination from both straight and gay communities.
 - Some people believe it may be more difficult for a bisexual person to 'come out' than it is for a gay man or lesbian, because the bisexual person isn't making the relatively clear-cut choice of rejecting heterosexuality.
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Bisexuality is when a person finds both men and women physically, sexually or emotionally attractive. Bisexuality is a general term only, because there are many differences between individuals. For example, people who are attracted to men and women may not necessarily label themselves as bisexual – they may consider themselves to be primarily straight or gay, or they may choose not to adopt any label to describe their sexuality. In other cases, a person may have sexual feelings towards men and women, but only have sex with people from one gender, or they may abstain from sex altogether. The attraction isn't always evenly weighted, since a bisexual person may have stronger feelings towards one gender than another. This can vary depending on the people they meet, since sexual chemistry between individuals is complex and unpredictable.

Common myths around bisexuality

In the past, the psychological community ignored bisexuality because it was assumed that bisexuality didn't exist. Other approaches included considering it to be deviant behaviour or a phase that soon passes. Bisexuality's low profile in society means that many misconceptions have been allowed to flourish.

Common myths include:

- Bisexuals just can't decide – Western concepts of sexuality often rely on opposites (man or woman, straight or gay), and bisexuality doesn't fit neatly. This is one of the main reasons why bisexuality is often so difficult for other people to understand.
- Bisexuals like to look androgynous – the way a person looks, behaves and dresses are different things, and usually not related to sexual preference.
- Bisexuals are promiscuous – the range of relationship styles varies as it does in straight and gay communities. Some bisexuals are in committed relationships, some are serial monogamists, in open relationships or in relationships with more than one partner, and some prefer casual relationships or celibacy, with every variation in between.
- Bisexuals have raging libidos – it is sometimes assumed that a ravenous appetite for sex is what leads a person to bisexual behaviour. This isn't true. The libido of bisexuals is the same as the libido of anyone else in the community, which ranges from not wanting sex at all to wanting it often, with every variation in between.
- Bisexuals spread AIDS – the commonly cited scenarios include the married man who has gay affairs, and the woman who has affairs with men while in a lesbian relationship. It is unsafe sex, not bisexuality, which spreads AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Coming out issues for a bisexual person

Coming out as bisexual can be a lengthy and ongoing process. Without support, and with limited social awareness of bisexuality, it can be bewildering.

A person coming out as bisexual may be thought of as being unable to make up their mind, and experience criticism for this. They may also have to convince family and friends to abandon stereotypical views of what it means to be bisexual.

As there are no obvious signs of bisexuality to display, it can be hard to convince sceptical family members and friends that you are truly bisexual. A person in a long-term relationship will often be assumed to be gay or straight,

depending on the sex of their current partner. As a result, people who are bisexual may find themselves having to 'come out' over and over again.

Discrimination and prejudice of bisexual people

Bisexual people can experience discrimination from both straight and gay communities. For example, some heterosexual people may assume a bisexual person is straight but just 'experimenting' with gay sex, while some homosexual people may assume the person is gay but still having heterosexual relationships because they are afraid of 'coming out' or accepting their gay sexual orientation.

A person who is bisexual can feel social pressure to choose which gender they prefer. Some people may be hesitant to admit to bisexual feelings or experiences because of fear of prejudice from family, friends and the wider community.

Finding support for bisexuality

If you think you might be bisexual, are feeling confused or are experiencing discrimination, it might be helpful to talk it over with people that you trust. There are also LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer) services in every state and territory. **There is always someone you can talk to.**

In Victoria, you can contact:

- LGBTIQ-specific support services such as:
 - **Switchboard Victoria** – Tel. **1800 184 527** (counsellors are available 3 pm – 12 am every day)
 - **QLife** – a national counselling and referral service for people of diverse sex, genders and sexualities Tel. **1800 184 527** or use online chat, 3 pm – 12 am, 7 days a week.
- other counselling and support services such as:
 - **Kids Helpline** Tel. **1800 55 1800**, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
 - **Lifeline** Tel. **13 11 14**, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
 - **Bi+ Australia** Tel: **1300 664 238**
 - **Suicide Call Back Service** Tel. **1300 659 467**.

Where to get help

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- **Lifeline** Tel. **13 11 14**, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- **QLife** – a national counselling and referral service for people of diverse sex, genders and sexualities Tel. **1800 184 527** or use online chat, 3 pm – 12 am, 7 days a week
- **ReachOut**
- **Switchboard Victoria** Tel. **1800 184 527** Counsellors are available daily from 3 pm to 6 pm, 7 days a week
- **beyondblue** Tel. **1300 22 4636** 24, hours a day, 7 days a week

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