

Help ? My roommate's a lesbian! ^[1]

Dear Alice,

I need advice. I think that my roommate is a lesbian. Help!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Answer

Dear Reader,

It's great that you're reaching out for advice rather than keeping your feelings tucked away. It may be helpful to first determine why you're asking this question. Maybe you're looking for some general information about sexuality and sexual orientation. Or, maybe you're looking for a way to talk to your roommate because you're concerned or worried? Perhaps you feel nervous around her and you want to feel more comfortable? Also take a minute to reflect on why you think she might be a lesbian. Did she say or do something specific? Was there something lying around the room that triggered this thought for you? In any case, you might try looking at the situation as an opportunity to learn about someone different from you. This is one of the best things about living with new roommates – the opportunity to learn and grow.

First, a quick primer on sexuality and sexual orientation: popular culture tends to show people as either straight or gay; however many sexuality experts actually believe that humans fall on a continuum of sexual orientations. The [Kinsey Scale](#) ^[2] is one version of this continuum, on which exclusively heterosexual (attracted to the opposite sex) people are a "0" on the scale, while exclusively homosexual (attracted to the same sex) people are a "6." In reality, many people fall somewhere between these two extremes: some individuals may be attracted predominantly to one sex, but sometimes attracted to the other; there may be others who are equally attracted to both or experience different attractions at different times in life (also known as fluidity). Your roommate may fall anywhere along this spectrum – maybe she is primarily attracted to certain folks of a particular gender or sex, maybe only sometimes, or maybe not at all. Or, she may be fluid. The truth is that sexuality is only one aspect of a person, and it's very specific and personal to each individual.

Once you've mulled over those nuanced topics, it may also be helpful to explore your own feelings about your roommate potentially being a lesbian before speaking with her. What does it mean for you if your roommate is attracted to people of the same sex or identifies herself as a lesbian? Does it affect your living situation or your relationship with her? Are you uncomfortable with homosexuality, or concerned about how others will react if they know you're living with a lesbian? Do you worry that others will think you're a lesbian, too? To get

more information about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) topics and help clarify your feelings and concerns, you may consider checking out some Q&As in the [LGBTQ](#) ^[3] category from the *Go Ask Alice!* archives. You may also find helpful information from [Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays \(PFLAG\)](#) ^[4].

Further, by reflecting on your own thoughts and feelings, you can learn about yourself and expand your worldview. Remember that your roommate is the same person she was before you had the idea that she may be a lesbian. If she had likable traits before, then she'll continue to have these likable traits; if she was unpleasant before, she'll probably continue to be unpleasant regardless of her sexuality. Identifying as a lesbian doesn't change your roommate at all, it just means you know more about another dimension of her world.

Once you've thoroughly considered your own feelings and learned a bit more, you may decide that you don't need to ask your roommate about her sexuality and you'd rather she come to you if she wants to talk about it. Or perhaps you may feel a desire to talk to your roommate. If that's the case, what would you like to say to her? Perhaps it would help to write your thoughts and questions in a letter that you don't send, to clarify your feelings. It may also be helpful to talk to your resident assistant (if you live in a residence hall), a health promotion specialist, or a counselor in order to plan what you might say in a discussion. You could talk with your roommate about some of your thoughts ? not asking her to justify or explain herself, but simply expressing your observations, any concerns, and your eagerness to learn. Then let her respond. She may or may not answer your questions about her sexuality directly; this is her choice. If you're already friends, she may need your support and friendship and could be afraid of losing it because you're uncomfortable with her orientation. If you aren't yet friends, this discussion may be a great way to create a bond. By keeping an open mind about her sexual orientation, you can maintain a congenial living situation, and maybe even have a meaningful friendship that lasts beyond your time living together.

Here's to learning, growing, and expanding your world!

Alice!

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[Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, or Questioning](#) ^[3]

[Homophobia](#) ^[6]

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Resources

[Alice! Health Promotion \(Morningside\)](#) ^[11]

[Center for Student Wellness \(CUMC\)](#) ^[12]

Published date:

Nov 15, 1996

Last reviewed on:

Dec 23, 2016

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