

Bored with white friends ^[1]

Dear Alice,

I am white guy and have friends from many different backgrounds. I have started to notice that I have a much better time with my non-white friends, and have been accused of ignoring my own race. The thing is, when I go out with my white friends, I am always bored. When I am with my non-white friends, I have a much better time. Is there something wrong with a white guy who does not really like to be around white people?

Answer

Dear Reader,

It's great that you have friendships with people from all different backgrounds because it offers you the chance to learn and experience new things. And just being able to ask a question like this shows how invested you are in developing rich, meaningful relationships. The short answer to your question is, "no, there's nothing wrong with you." At the same time, it offers a great opportunity to consider how ethnicity and culture impact our lives and relationships. As you probably already know, thinking and talking about these issues can be difficult, but also very rewarding.

Numerous factors have an impact on our relationships and how (and with whom) we choose to spend our time. Understanding why you prefer to spend time with particular people can help you become clearer about your values, which may improve your friendships overall. Many people who help build bridges across cultures suggest that the first step to developing meaningful relationships with individuals from other backgrounds is to spend time thinking and learning about your own background.

If you haven't already, you might consider taking some time to think about what being white means to you. Knowing how you feel about your own ethnicity and what it means to those with whom you interact can help provide a foundation for understanding culture more broadly. How do you feel about being white? When did you first realize you were white? What did you learn growing up about what it means to be white? With what values from your culture do you agree/disagree? How do you think being white affects your relationships with other white people and with people of color? There are a number of organizations that work with white people to analyze issues related to white identity, including the [Anti-racist Alliance](#) ^[2] and the [Social Justice Training Institute](#) ^[3].

You might also think about what attracts you to being in a group of people of color. While

shared interests alone may be the reason you gravitate towards friendships with people of color, there may be something deeper going on. For example, are you the only white person in this group? If so, does it make you feel unique? Do people in your group of friends give you special attention or an important place in the group because you're white? Those things aren't necessarily bad, just things to think about in terms of trying to figure out the appeal of one group over another, or how other people in either group might feel.

Why do you think people are concerned about you "ignoring your own race?" Is this criticism coming from specific white friends who may be trying to say that they miss you and want to see more of you? Or, perhaps it is coming from people of color who may be asking you to think about the role of race in your relationships with them? To what degree do you have the opportunity to move between groups that others may not have? Alternately, some people feel threatened by interracial friendships or relationships. Even though segregation is legally a thing of the past, bias and discrimination are still all too common. Race is a sensitive topic that can make people very defensive. If talking about ethnicity or racism brings up defensiveness for you or other people, it'd be good to take a step back and think about what feels threatening and why.

Another thing to ponder is if your expectations about people are impacting your relationships with them. Stereotypes, whether they are perceived as good or bad, can be limiting. They may prevent people from being seen for who they are as individuals and further encourage rigid social norms that pressure people to act a certain way. Attributing someone's likeability to her/his ethnicity can distract us from seeing people as individuals.

For example, is it the ethnicity of your non-white friends that makes them more fun? Do you have interests in common or share a sense of humor with the people of color you know that the white people in your life don't share? If so, why do you think that is? If you found white friends who liked the same activities or humor as you, do you think you would find them boring?

While there's actually no quick answer to your dilemma, your situation offers an opportunity to think about your own culture, what it means to you and the people with whom you interact, and how culture and ethnicity affect relationships. The fact that you're thinking about these issues suggests you have an open mind and a desire to connect with people across similarities and differences. And, hopefully these discussions can deepen your relationships with all of the people in your life.

Alice!

Category:

[Relationships](#) ^[4]

[Culture, Race, Religion, & Family](#) ^[5]

Related questions

[Only attracted to Asian women](#) ^[6]

[Interfaith couple](#) ^[7]

[Healthy versus unhealthy relationships](#) ^[8]

[Parents don't approve of interracial relationship](#) ^[9]

[Catholic and atheist consider marriage](#) ^[10]

[Bored with doing the same things day after day](#) ^[11]

Published date:

Oct 19, 2007

Last reviewed on:

Jul 21, 2015

Footer menu

- ▼ Contact Alice!
 - Content Use
 - Media Inquiries
 - Comments & Corrections
- ▼ Syndication & Licensing
 - Licensing Q&As
 - Get Alice! on Your Website
 - Full Site Syndication
 - Link to Go Ask Alice!

Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.

If you are in an urgent situation, please visit our Emergency page to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

Source URL: <http://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/bored-white-friends#comment-0>

Links

- [1] <http://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/bored-white-friends>
- [2] <http://www.antiracistalliance.com/>
- [3] <http://www.sjti.org/index.html>
- [4] <http://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/relationships>
- [5] <http://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/culture-race-religion-family>
- [6] <http://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/only-attracted-asian-women>
- [7] <http://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/interfaith-couple>
- [8] <http://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/healthy-versus-unhealthy-relationships-0>
- [9] <http://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/parents-dont-approve-interracial-relationship-0>
- [10] <http://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/catholic-and-atheist-consider-marriage-0>
- [11] <http://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/bored-doing-same-things-day-after-day-0>