Bisexual acceptance in the queer community

Dear Alice,

I am openly bisexual and have been for years. I want to get involved with a queer community on campus, but I am afraid of being discriminated against for being bisexual and not lesbian, as bisexuals are often viewed as just greedy and unfaithful. What should I do?

— Unsure

Answer

Dear Unsure,

Kudos for wanting to be involved! Your hesitation is understandable-, though — some hold a definition of sexuality that is more rigid and constant than what's actually experienced by many people. As a result, those who identify as bisexual often feel as though they aren't fully accepted within the straight or queer communities. Still, with an open mind, some searching, and a willingness to try some groups on for size, you may find a community that will support and accept you — sexuality and all!

Being open and comfortable with your sexuality is the first step in finding a community to support you; it sounds like you're already there. The next step is to find a community in which to get involved. It seems as though you know there's a queer community on campus, but, if you aren't sure, you could contact your school's center for student life. You can also visit their website for a list of student organizations on campus. If there are no LGBTQ+ (e.g. queer, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning, sexual non-conformists, and so forth) groups on campus, consider starting your own!

You may also be able to locate nearby LGBTQ+ community centers and organizations that are located off campus by visiting CenterLink[^2]. Once you have a few organizations on your list, you could contact the groups' leaders and plan on attending one of their meetings or events. You may even consider speaking to the group representative on the philosophy of the group in regards to inclusiveness. If you feel comfortable, you could express your concerns. Paying attention to the response you get could be revealing.
If you find yourself faced with biphobic behaviors, remarks, or reactions, you have a few options. Depending on the situation, you may be able to address them directly. Doing this without being accusatory or “fighting fire with fire” may not only help you assert your confidence in your sexuality but also give a voice to others who feel discriminated against. Communicating openly and finding common ground with those who you’re concerned may have inaccurate perceptions about you due to your sexual orientation may help them realize that these perceptions are inaccurate. However, if you feel at all threatened or unsafe, it’s perfectly okay to leave the situation and even report it to a public safety officer on your campus or in the area. Additional tips on confronting discrimination may be found in the related Q&As.

As with any relationship, it may take a while before you find your perfect match in the queer community. Your concern over acceptance is one that is shared by many bisexual folk and there are resources and support available to you. You can continue your search by visiting bi-friendly websites such as the Bisexual Resource Center [3] or the American Institute of Bisexuality [4]. For more personalized help with addressing discrimination and other bi concerns, you may find it helpful to make an appointment with a mental health professional. With these resources in hand, you'll be well on your way to finding a community that will support and accept you for you. Good-bi, for now!

Alice!

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- Relationships [5]
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- Relating [7]

Related questions

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How do I know if I’m gay? [10]
Resources for LGBTQ+ young adults in New Jersey... and everywhere else [11]

Resources

Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (Morningside) [12]
Mental Health Services (CUIMC) [13]

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[5] https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/relationships