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## Bisexual? <sup>[1]</sup>

Dear Alice,

Friends have approached me with questions about bisexuality. I never considered myself to be bisexual, but I have always been interested in (X-rated movies) women having sex. I admit that I have fantasized about it, but I am not sure if it means that I am bisexual. I am in a heterosexual relationship and enjoy intimacy with my partner. Is it possible that I may be bisexual????

Signed,  
?Bisexual?

## Answer

Dear ?Bisexual?,

Despite the confusion and pressure there seems to be to find a neat label for your sexuality, you have full control over if and how you choose to label yourself. As such, it's possible you're bisexual, and it's possible you aren't. While you're considering all of this, you might take a step back and consider why it matters to you how you label yourself. After all, your sexual orientation simply describes who you're attracted to and doesn't change your character. With that in mind, keep reading to explore this further!

When talking about sexuality, it may be helpful to tease apart sex from gender, and understand how those two may factor into a person's sexual orientation. While sex is a biological construct which accounts for a person's genetic makeup (e.g., male, female, intersex), gender is a social construct which refers to how a person sees themselves. Generally, labels for gender are entirely dependent on what the individual feels comfortable with and if they even want to define themselves in the first place. Some common terms for gender include (but aren't limited to): man, woman, cisgender, transgender, genderfluid, or non-binary. Typically, gender plays a bigger role than sex in describing a person's sexual orientation (who they're attracted to emotionally, romantically, and physically), their behaviors (with whom they become sexually active), and their identity (how they label themselves). For those new to the concepts of sex and gender, check out Planned Parenthood's [comprehensive overview on gender and gender identity](#) <sup>[2]</sup> to learn more.

To date, there's been extensive research suggesting that sexual orientation exists along a

continuum — ranging from exclusive attraction to people of the same gender, to exclusive attraction to people of a different gender. Moreover, evidence suggests that sexuality is fluid, and often changes for people across their lifetimes. Some sexualities include, but aren't limited to:

- **Heterosexual** (or "straight"): being attracted to people of another gender
- **Gay or lesbian**: being attracted to people of the same gender
- **Bisexual**: being attracted to people of two genders, to equal or varying degrees
- **Pansexual**: being attracted to people regardless of their gender, to equal or varying degrees
- **Asexual**: not being sexually attracted to anyone

It's crucial to note that many people may not label their sexual orientations in a way that lines up with their attractions, behaviors, and identities — and that's okay. For example, Person A identifies as a man who's only attracted to other individuals who identify as men, pursues relationships with them, and identifies as gay. However, Person B identifies as a woman who's attracted to both men and women, pursues relationships only with people who consider themselves men, and identifies as heterosexual. Unlike Person A, Person B's sexual preferences don't necessarily match her sexual identity, but her experience is equally as valid as Person A's. But why might these factors not line up for everyone? Some people may choose to identify as heterosexual, for fear of discrimination from their loved ones [3] and society, fear of not being believed, or having their experiences dismissed as a mere 'phase.' For others, it's possible that their sexual orientations are changing across their lifetime.

Furthermore, it's worth emphasizing that people who are bisexual often experience and express varying attractions to people of different genders. For example, a bisexual person could be attracted to men 90 percent of the time and women ten percent of the time or even be more deeply attracted to men over women. So what does this all mean for you? As said earlier, it's possible that you are or aren't bisexual. It's perfectly okay to consider yourself heterosexual yet have bisexual fantasies. Likewise, it's okay to view yourself as bisexual even if you only pursue relationships with men. If *you* feel comfortable, and wish to label yourself as bisexual, go for it. You may also find that you don't want to label yourself at all, and that's okay too. And remember, if you claim a label and eventually feel that it isn't a good fit for you, you're in control and can change it at any point in your life.

Alice!

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Published date:

Oct 01, 1993

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