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## How do I know if I'm gay? <sup>[1]</sup>

Dear Alice,

I have a problem. I've never considered myself gay, but I have begun to care for my best friend a little more than I think I should. I get jealous when he finds a woman he likes, and begins going out with her, and I have become very protective of him, since he is a few years younger than me. I don't know if I am just a little jealous that he is able to find someone, and I am not, or if I am gay and am beginning to like him in that way. When I think about it, he fits my idea of my perfect mate. And I often wonder what his penis size is. Help me. Do you think I am gay, or just suffering from jealousy and penis envy?

### Answer

Dear Reader,

Figuring out if and how to label your sexual orientation may be a confusing and complicated process — especially when a close friend is involved. Considering that it's entirely a personal decision, the only person who can truly answer your question "Am I gay?" is you. Regardless of whether you're sexually attracted to your friend or not, it seems clear that you're curious about the way you feel about him. To better understand this feeling, it might be valuable for you to self-reflect and examine your potential feelings for him and any other men. While you consider your sexuality <sup>[2]</sup>, you might choose to explore it by going on dates with men, and potentially participating in sexual activities with them. Also, depending on how you feel about your friend and how you think this might affect your friendship with him, you may consider sharing your feelings with him and seeing where that takes you. In regards to your thoughts about his penis size, it's not uncommon for people to be curious about other's bodies or to compare themselves to others. Ultimately, what you're feeling or thinking may not be at all reflective of your sexuality or it could be.

For some people, the idea of identifying as something other than heterosexual may bring up a host of positive and negative feelings. For some people, the idea of labeling and claiming an intimate part of their identity feels empowering and freeing. Yet, for others, there may be a fear of social stigma and consequences. Others may find that they don't identify with already established labels. With that said, it might be helpful for you to explore how you feel about different sexual orientations, both in general and as it relates to you.

To guide your process of reflection, here are some questions to consider:

- How do you view gay men in the media, in your social circle, and within your community?
- How might you feel if you realized you're sexually attracted to men, including your friend?
- If you do determine you're attracted to men, how do you feel about adopting (or rejecting) the label 'gay'?
- If you find that you identify as gay, how do you think your loved ones, including your friend, would react to learning about your sexual orientation?

By answering these questions openly and honestly, you might understand your feelings and identity even further. It's also worth reiterating that how a person labels their sexual orientation <sup>[3]</sup> may not line up with their sexual attractions, behaviors, and their identity. So, even if you're sexually attracted to your friend, you may not wish to identify as gay. Alternatively, even if you're unsure or questioning your identity, you may wish to call yourself gay. These identities can be fluid and change over time, so how you identify now may be different in years to come. In all cases, it's completely okay and up to you.

Having said all of this, it's also possible that you're simply worried about the girls your friend is attracted to, or jealous of his dating life. Since he's your best friend and you deeply care for him, it's natural to want to look out for him. Have there been any red flags with the women he likes that would imply he might get hurt? If your friend or his partners have done anything to worry you, it may be helpful for you to share these concerns with him. That said, if no red flags have been raised and you suspect your jealousy arises from your feelings, you may wish to work through these feelings on your own, with another close friend or family member, or with a mental health professional.

Hopefully you feel a little more prepared to question (and potentially explore) your feelings as it relates to your friend. You may also find it helpful to check out the related Q&As to read about other folks exploring their sexuality. Remember, if and how you choose to label yourself is entirely up to you.

Alice!

Category:

Relationships <sup>[4]</sup>

Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, Queer, and Questioning (LGBTQ+) <sup>[5]</sup>

Questioning sexuality <sup>[6]</sup>

## **Related questions**

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People think I'm gay... but I'm not [8]

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Published date:

May 10, 1996

Last reviewed on:

May 25, 2018

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