

Bisexual People

Frequently Asked Questions

What does it mean to be bisexual?

Bisexual people have the capacity to be sexually, romantically, and emotionally attracted to other people regardless of their gender. They are able to have intimate, loving, and committed relationships with people who are of the same or opposite gender.

Does bisexuality really exist? Aren't bisexual people just afraid of being gay?

Yes, bisexuality is a valid sexual orientation. Some people come to identify as bisexual after having first identified as heterosexual. About 30 percent of people who identify as bisexual first identified as lesbian or gay.

Historically, it has been difficult for bisexual people to find community support for their orientation, so they have felt compelled to identify as either heterosexual, gay, or lesbian. As acceptance for bisexuality has grown, more people feel comfortable claiming this identity.

Aren't bisexual people promiscuous?

It is a common myth that bisexual people are promiscuous. They are no more promiscuous than people of other sexual orientations.

Do bisexual people need to date or be in relationships with both a man and a woman in order to be satisfied?

No. As with other people, just because a person is attracted to more than one person, it doesn't mean that person needs to act on that attraction or be in relationships with both a man and a woman at the same time. Bisexual people are able to have deeply satisfying, committed, long-term, and monogamous relationships that don't differ from those of their heterosexual, gay, and lesbian counterparts.

If a bisexual person dates or marries someone of the opposite gender, why does she/he still consider her/himself bisexual?

Bisexuality is a core part of one's identity. It isn't contingent on whether or not a person is in a relationship. It is similar to heterosexuality: a heterosexual person is heterosexual whether or not she or he is celibate, dating, or married.

If a bisexual person dates or marries someone of the same gender, why does that person continue to identify as bisexual? Isn't he or she really gay?

Again, one's sexual orientation isn't contingent on being in any given relationship. It is about honoring a core and authentic part of oneself.

If a person is bisexual, why doesn't that person just marry a woman or man?

Many bisexual people do get married. Those in a primary relationship with a person of the same gender face the same challenges to getting married as gay or lesbian people. It depends on where they live and whether or not same-gender marriage is legal there. However, getting married doesn't change one's sexual orientation.

Aren't bisexual people just fence-sitters who are afraid to commit one way or the other?

This myth assumes that sexual orientation consists of only two possibilities: heterosexual or gay/lesbian. Scientists have long recognized that sexual orientation is complex and falls along a continuum from heterosexual to gay/lesbian.

Sometimes I am attracted to people of the same gender, but I've had exclusively heterosexual intimate relationships. Does that mean that I'm really bisexual?

Not necessarily. It isn't uncommon for heterosexual people to have feelings, fantasies, attractions, or even sexual activity with another person of the same gender at one time or another and not identify as bisexual, gay, or lesbian.

For example, Dr. Alfred Kinsey's research in 1948 and 1953 found that 30 to 40 percent of males and 15 to 35 percent of females had engaged in bisexual behavior. A study in 2004 (Hoburg) found that 29 to 32 percent of female self-identified heterosexual college students reported same-gender feelings or preferences for both genders. About 12 to 19 percent of male self-identified heterosexual college students reported same-gender feelings or preferences for both genders.

Despite these rather high percentages, only about 5 percent of men and 3 percent of women, according to the Janus Report (1993), actually identify as bisexual. How people come to identify as any one sexual orientation is complex and not fully understood.

How can I be welcoming of bisexual people in my congregation?

Mention "bisexual" when you refer to sexual minority groups that are included and valued in your congregation. Be open to examining some of the beliefs and myths that you may have about bisexual people and be willing to replace them with more accurate information.

Try not to be surprised when you see an unpartnered, bisexual person dating someone of one gender and then later dating someone of the other gender. Support them in their relationships, just as you support everyone else.

What can I learn from bisexual people?

Human sexuality isn't an "either/or" proposition. Sexual attraction is a mystery. Relationships are made holy because of the quality of care shared between the partners, rather than the sexual orientation or gender identity of either of the partners. And, as with any relationships, the more we learn about humans, the more we learn about God. Bisexual people are a reminder that God loves each one of us for who we are, embracing us fully as human beings who desire to love and be loved.

How can I be helpful to my friend/colleague/child who is coming out as bisexual?

Let the person know that you believe her/him. All too often, bisexual people are told by people who are heterosexual or gay/lesbian that they must be confused; that they must really be gay or straight but just don't want to admit it; or that they just haven't met the right person.

Bisexual people have often felt rejected by both the straight and gay/lesbian communities. If they are coming out to you, they are hoping that you will be different and that you will receive and honor their truth. Ask them to tell you what it is like for them. Show them that you love and care for them and are able to accept their new self-understanding.