

## What is Asexuality?

Asexuality typically refers to someone who experiences little-to-no sexual attraction—but asexuality is a diverse spectrum, and everyone experiences it differently.

Some asexual people experience varying levels of sexual attraction, while others won't. And for some, those levels of attraction may fluctuate—or only be present under specific circumstances. Asexuality is not a moral statement, a decision, or a dysfunction—and it's not celibacy.

Approximately [1% of the population are asexual](#)—and it can sometimes be a journey to discover where you fall on the spectrum. But everyone's experiences are valid.

Asexuality is an umbrella term, and there are many different types of asexuality people can identify with—such as demisexual or grey-asexual. Not every asexual person will identify with these particular labels.

Asexual people will often use the [split attraction model](#) to define their personality. This separates sexual attraction from romantic attraction – someone identifying as a homoromantic asexual means they experience romantic attraction towards people of the same gender but no sexual attraction.

## Glossary

### **Demisexual**

Demisexual refers to someone who can only feel sexual attraction when they feel a strong emotional bond with someone. There is no set timeline for how long these bonds might take to develop—and developing a bond does not automatically mean someone will then feel sexual attraction.

### **Grey-sexual**

Also known as grey-sexual, grey-ace, or grace; grey-asexual refers to someone who experiences fluctuating levels of sexual and romantic desires. These desires may be common, rare, or only under specific circumstances. Just as grey covers all shades between black and white, grey-asexual identities can fall anywhere between no sexual attraction to minimal sexual attraction.

### **Aromantic**

Aromantic is a separate identity to asexuality but is common within the asexual community. Aromantic people (or aros) experience little to no romantic attraction towards other people and exist outside of the asexual community as well. One's romantic identity may be separate from their sexual identity; people who identify as both asexual and aromantic may refer to themselves as aro-ace and feel that their lack of either sexual or romantic attraction is a singular identity rather than two separate ones.

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Contact QLife

Health professionals wanting to know more can contact [ask@qlife.org.au](mailto:ask@qlife.org.au)

QLife is available 365 days a year, 3pm - midnight.  
call 1800 184 527 | webchat  
[www.qlife.org.au](http://www.qlife.org.au)

*This QGuide was produced in collaboration with Zoe Simmons, award winning copywriter and journalist, with peer review undertaken by a Switchboard QLife volunteer who identifies within the ace community. Work for this QGuide was undertaken on the unceded lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and the Wurrundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. QLife pays our respects to Elders and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples across this country we know as Australia.*

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## Asexuality intersects with many other Queer identities

There are bisexual, gay, lesbian, pansexual, queer, intersex, trans, gender fluid, and non-binary asexual people. There are also asexual people who may not identify with any other LGBTIQ+ identity at all. In any case, their asexuality is valid.

For example, someone identifying as bisexual ace might be referring to their romantic attraction towards multiple genders along with their lack of sexual attraction. There are no hard rules to this however, and each individual can determine their identity as they see fit.

## Misconceptions about Asexuality

There are a lot of misconceptions about asexuality—and these misconceptions can be incredibly harmful, and further perpetuate stigma against asexual people.

A common misconception about asexuality is that asexual people aren't romantically or sexually inclined, which isn't always true. Asexuality is about experiencing sexual attraction, not about one's sexual behaviour, values, desires, or experiences such as libido or arousal. Some people will feel romantic and sexual attraction to varying degrees and under varying circumstances, while others won't. Asexual people can still fall in love, get into romantic relationships, experience arousal, have sex, and build families, while others might prefer purely platonic relationships and interactions. There is no one right way to be asexual, nor does one's behaviour, history or relationships invalidate their asexual identity.

Asexuality is not a repression—nor is it a result of mental illness or abuse. It is not a loss of libido, a dysfunction, or a fear of intimacy, and it's not something to be treated or fixed. Asexual people are not missing something. But despite this, a lot of asexual people are still told things like “you just haven't met the right person”, which is incredibly invalidating, and inaccurate.

Just like other queer identities, higher rates of mental illness, trauma and abuse aren't directly tied to those identities but rather because of things like isolation, bigotry, and other minority stressors.

## Resources and Further Reading

<https://acesandaros.org/learn/the-aseexual-umbrella>

<https://asexualsurvivors.org/education/what-is-aseexuality/>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/the-invisible-orientation/201501/aseexuality-and-the-health-professional>

[Exploring Asexuality: The “A” in LGBTQIA+ \[Internet\]. Psych Central. 2021 \[cited 2023 Aug 11\].](#)

## Dangers faced by Asexual people

There are a lot of dangers faced by asexual people, largely thanks to stigma and the idea that asexual people “need to be fixed”.

One of the biggest dangers asexual people can experience is sexual trauma, sometimes under the guise of “curing” someone of their asexuality. Sexual trauma is difficult for anyone to experience, but especially for someone who is asexual, and navigating trauma and identity can be incredibly challenging. Additionally asexual people often feel pressured to engage in unwanted sexual behaviour in order to ‘fit in’, particularly before they know about asexual identities. Many stereotypical ways of reclaiming your body and sexually healing can feel isolating and alienating to an asexual person.

Another major danger is so-called “health professionals” who will also try to “fix” asexual people. They may not recognise or understand asexuality—or may see it as hypoactive sexual desire disorder—and treat it with psychology, or prescribe medication to boost sex drive. It wasn't too long ago that [homosexuality was still listed as a mental health disorder](#)—the 1980s, to be exact—so it's not surprising that some health professionals may be operating under stigmatising, outdated and harmful assumptions.

## Working with people who are Asexual

- There is a lot of stigma and misinformation when it comes to asexuality—but it's important to remember asexuality is a valid identity; and everyone experiences it differently.
- Some asexual people may be interested in parts of romantic or sexual activities—but they may not always see those activities as romantic or sexual.
- Asexual people are not broken. It's not a disorder, and asexual people don't need to be fixed.
- Someone does not need to be sexual or romantic to be happy. Our society often overstates the importance of sex and romance, which is a repressive and isolating view. In fact, a lot of asexual people feel relief when it comes to not having sexual or romantic desires. They may also feel happy that they're able to put their energy into other things instead. Identifying as asexual is not a tragedy: for many people, it is freeing.
- You might hear an asexual person refer to themselves as “ace”, which is a shortened way of saying asexual.
- If you're going to work with asexual people, take the time to learn about asexuality. Listen to and read stories from people who are asexual, and make sure you're affirming and reassuring with your practice.

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