

*An Overview by AVEN*

# BEING “ASEXY” ASEXUALITY AS AN ORIENTATION



*Being true to oneself is like a mask “melting” off.*

An asexual is someone who does not experience sexual attraction. Unlike celibacy, which people choose, asexuality is an intrinsic part of who we are. Asexuality does not make our lives any worse or any better, we just face a different set of challenges than most sexual people. There is considerable diversity among the asexual community; each asexual person experiences things like relationships, attraction, and arousal somewhat differently. Asexuality is just beginning to be the subject of scientific research.

Asexual people have the same emotional needs as anyone else, and like in the sexual community we vary widely in how we fulfill those needs. Some asexual people are happier on their own, others are

happiest with a group of close friends. Other asexual people have a desire to form more intimate romantic relationships, and will date and seek long-term partnerships. Asexual people are just as likely to date sexual people as we are to date each other.

Sexual or nonsexual, all relationships are made up of the same basic stuff.

Communication, closeness, fun, humor, excitement and trust all happen just as much in sexual relationships as in nonsexual ones. Unlike sexual people, asexual people are given few expectations about the way that our intimate relationships will work. Figuring out how to flirt, to be intimate, or to be monogamous in nonsexual relationships can be challenging, but free of sexual

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*The asexual flag.*

expectations we can form relationships in ways that are grounded in our individual needs and desires.

Many asexual people experience attraction, but we feel no need to act out that attraction sexually. Instead we feel a desire to get to know someone, to get close to them in whatever way works best for us. Asexual people who experience attraction will often be attracted to a particular gender, and will identify as lesbian, gay, bi, or straight.

For some sexual arousal is a fairly regular occurrence, though it is not associated with a desire to find a sexual partner or partners. Some will occasionally masturbate, but feel no desire for partnered sexuality. Other asexual people experience little or no arousal. Because we don’t care about sex, asexual people generally do not see a lack of sexual arousal as a problem to be corrected, and focus their energy on enjoying other types of arousal and pleasure.

People do not need sexual arousal to be healthy,

but in a minority of cases a lack of arousal can be the symptom of a more serious medical condition. If you do not experience sexual arousal or if you suddenly lose interest in sex you should probably check with a doctor just to be safe.

Most people on AVEN have been asexual for our entire lives. Just as people will rarely and unexpectedly go from being straight to gay, asexual people will rarely and unexpectedly become sexual or vice versa. Another small minority will think of themselves as asexual for a brief period of time while exploring and questioning their own sexuality.

There is no litmus test to determine if someone is asexual. Asexuality is like any other identity—at its core, it’s just a word that people use to help figure themselves out. If at any point someone finds the word asexual useful to describe themselves, we encourage them to use it for as long as it makes sense to do so.

*Similar to a purity ring, a black band around the right middle finger is a sign of asexuality.*

