
THIS IS NOT A COMING OUT LETTER

I was never “in” the proverbial closet. As far back as I can remember I was curious about both men and women--I was never “straight.” As I heard the word lesbian tossed around in middle school and saw girls holding hands in the hallways, I realized that my curiosities about women were something I could potentially act on. As I went through high school, I rebelliously dated whoever I wanted that liked me back, male or female, and never really felt pressured to make a choice between the two, never felt pressured to call myself straight, lesbian, or bisexual- I was just **experimenting**. About a month before my high school graduation I developed an overwhelming crush on a mysteriously gorgeous woman. She was only a year older than me, but she lived on her own in a quirky downtown apartment. I remember hearing her say that she would never date a bisexual, because bisexuals couldn’t make up their minds. I felt like I had to make a choice for the first time: lesbian or bisexual--one allows me to date this woman, the other doesn’t?

I was crazy about her, so of course I chose to identify as lesbian and pretended that I always had (the label outlasted the relationship, by the way). I absorbed myself in gay and lesbian culture for several years and explored some of the wonderful ways that women love and support each other. I did a lot of stereotypical “lesbian” things, like learning how to use power tools, going to gay pride festivals, and figuring out how to feel attractive without heels or makeup; memories and lessons I’ll always cherish.

Then I developed romantic feelings for a guy. By that point I had learned that “bisexuals” are stereotyped as not only indecisive, but also as promiscuous and dishonest. I always knew I wasn’t completely a lesbian, but now that I wanted to date a man, my not-completely-a-lesbian-ness was about to be exposed. Would my friends reject me as a fake, or worse, as a *bisexual*?

Thank goodness they didn’t. They were very supportive. However, I didn’t reach a point of peace with my sexuality until I discovered the term **“pansexual.”** Pansexuality, as I see it, indicates that *gender is not a guiding factor* with regard to who I am attracted to. I fall for personalities. I am concerned with the character within the body and how that character engages with said body, **not the body itself**. Pansexuality allows me to view love the way I want to view it: as a spiritual, rather than predominantly physical endeavor, something that can’t be defined by cultural divisions such as gender.

If this feels weird or uncomfortable for you, please know that I understand, really, and it’s okay. You see, I feel discomfort about heterosexuality *and* homosexuality that is similar to how you may feel about pansexuality; defining romantic preferences based on physical specifics *feels weird* to me, and insisting that all future lovers will have the same type of genitals as all previous lovers *makes me profoundly uncomfortable*. I have a hard time understanding why sexual identity needs to be as restrictive and prescriptive as the terms *heterosexual* and *homosexual*, or as binary as the term *bisexual*. But just because it feels weird to me doesn’t mean it isn’t someone else’s very beautiful, lived reality.

In truth, what seems more important than *how we define* our own sexuality—or that of others,—is *how we feel* about our own sexual identity. With regard to being pansexual, I feel joyful, at peace, and a little bit lucky; my sexuality grows and changes with me, and I enjoy being allowed to love whoever I feel moved to love. My sexuality makes me feel free. How do you feel about yours?