



What NOT to say: Bisexuality

Whatever you do, please DON'T say this to a bisexual colleague

Despite all of the gains the LGBT community has made, bisexuals are still looked upon with confusion — or outright scorn — by gays, lesbians, and straight people alike. From people asking me if I was "full-blown gay yet" to others questioning my motivations, I've probably heard it all.

Unfortunately, the binary thinking of those who deny bisexuality's existence ultimately oppresses everyone by perpetuating unflinching standards of identity, whether they be heteronormative or homonormative. Being intimate with someone of the same sex doesn't mean you're gay, just like being intimate with someone of the opposite sex doesn't mean you're straight — it just means you fall somewhere in the beautiful, fluid spectrum of sexuality.

1. Bisexuals don't exist.

This is the first and most pervasive lie about bisexuality. Some people simply can't fathom a sexuality in which individuals are attracted to more than one gender. *You can test the waters, but you eventually must pick a side*, the thinking goes. But bisexuals don't need science — or the approval of those attracted to only one gender — to prove that they exist.

2. Bisexuals are just going through a phase.

Yes, it's true that plenty of gays and lesbians used bisexuality as a way to soften the blow of coming out to conservative parents. Many may even have identified as bi for a time while they were still making sense of their own orientation. And while coming out is an intensely personal decision, the strategies of some should not invalidate the identities of the majority, for whom bisexuality wasn't a "stepping stone" but the final, concrete destination.

3. Bisexuals are sexually greedy.

Bisexual people are not automatically more promiscuous than any other person — gay or straight. Being attracted to more than one gender does provide more potential partners, but it doesn't increase one's likelihood of physically or emotionally connecting with said potential partner. And just as having an eclectic taste in wine does not make one an alcoholic, being bisexual does not make you greedy.

4. Bisexuals are cheaters.

A cheater is a cheater. Bisexual people cheat, and so do people who identify as straight, gay, trans, or anything else. A person's sexuality or gender identity doesn't make them cheat.

5. All bisexuals are polyamorous.

While polyamory might appear more prevalent in the queer community, there is no hard data that ties polyamory more directly to bisexuals than people of any other orientation. Pursuing that type of relationship structure isn't attached to any given sexuality.

6. Bisexuals are scared of commitment.

Being attracted to both genders doesn't have anything to do with commitment. Alan Cumming addressed this misconception in a candid interview last year. "I have a healthy sexual appetite and a healthy imagination," Cumming told *Instinct magazine*. "I still define myself as a bisexual even though I have chosen to be with Grant. I'm sexually attracted to the female form even though I am with a man and I just feel that bisexuals have a bad rap."

7. All women are bisexual.

The sexualization of women knows no bounds in today's contemporary culture. But just because mainstream media continues to exploit female sexuality in a transparent attempt to sell products doesn't mean that all women swing both ways, a la Shakira and Rihanna in "Can't Remember to Forget You." Sorry, Shakira, we're not buying what those hips are selling.

8. Bisexuals are attracted to anything that moves.

Oh, please. Just because someone is bisexual doesn't mean they don't have standards. This is the same logic that homophobic dudes use for why they don't want to share a locker room with gay men. You *wish* we were looking at your junk, honey.

9. Bisexuals are only attracted to binary genders.

Respected bisexual activist Robyn Ochs (pictured) describes bisexuality as the potential "to be attracted — romantically and/or sexually — to people of more than one sex and/or gender, not necessarily at the same time, not necessarily in the same way, and not necessarily to the same degree." So no, it's not about the binary, folks.

10. Bisexuals spread HIV.

Men who have sex with men are at a disproportionate risk of HIV infection. But that doesn't make bisexuals more likely to spread the disease — taking the proper precautions is necessary regardless of your sexual orientation. Always use protection, and know your partner's status and your own.

