

An Educator's Guide to Asexuality

For More Information:



Visit:
<http://www.whatisasexuality.com/educators/guide/>



This guide is intended to be an introduction to the topic of asexuality for teachers, school counselors, and others in the education field who deal with sexuality education.

This is not intended to be a comprehensive examination of asexuality, it is simply a starting point for the conversation.

Pamphlet Produced By:



In Association With:



What is Asexuality?

Asexuality is a sexual orientation characterized by a persistent lack of sexual attraction toward any gender. According to a paper by sexuality researcher Dr. Anthony Bogaert, at least 1% of people are asexual. Asexual people are sometimes called “aces”.

Why is it Important to Address Asexuality in Sex Ed?

You almost certainly have a student who is asexual and doesn't even know that asexuality is an orientation. All they ever hear about is straight, gay, and bi, so they struggle to fit themselves into one of those boxes. They may feel confused. They may feel broken. You are in a unique position to help those students discover who they are.

You likely have a student that knows that they are asexual and doesn't see themselves represented in a standard sex ed curriculum. If they feel left out or feel that their identity is erased or “doesn't matter”, they may stop paying attention to the lessons, even to the parts that will be directly relevant to their lives.

Asexual students often feel lost and alone or “broken”. Their peers may be expressing a newfound interest in sex and they may look around and see the sex-charged culture we live in, and this may cause them to feel out of place or ostracized or like there's something “missing” in their lives. Ignoring asexuality in a sex ed course will only serve to reinforce the message that they're broken or don't belong. They may engage in harmful behaviors in an attempt to “fit in” or as a way to “fix themselves”. They may be pressured into taking part in

sexual activities that are unwanted or unwelcome because they feel that's what they're “supposed” to do.

At the same time, talking about asexuality will help other students understand that asexuality is a real, legitimate sexual orientation, which may help to lessen the bullying that many asexual students face.

How to Approach Asexuality

Make it clear that asexuality exists, that it is a real, “normal” sexual orientation, and that there is nothing wrong with people who are asexual. As part of that, be sure to mention asexuality along with other sexual orientations.

Treat it with respect. Don't joke about it or make dismissive or insulting remarks about it. If any students make derisive comments about asexuality, be sure to let them know that those kinds of comments can be offensive and are inappropriate.

Avoid universal statements, like “Everyone will want to have sex when they're older” or “When you hit puberty, you will start to develop feelings for other people.” Instead, use phrases like “most people will” or “you probably will”. Slight changes in wording can make all the difference.

Make it clear that not everyone wants sex or enjoys sex. That message is very important for asexual students to hear, and it can be valuable for some non-asexual students, too. Much of the conversation about sex is based on the assumption of universal interest and universal enjoyment of sex. For someone who does not want sex or does not like sex, that kind of language can be alienating or even harmful.

Mention that asexuality is not the same as abstinence or celibacy. Abstinence is the choice to deliberately refrain from sexual activity. People of any sexual orientation can practice abstinence.

Explain that there is a difference between romantic attraction and sexual attraction. The feeling of romantic attraction is often described as “I would like to date that person”, while the feeling of sexual attraction is often described as “I would like to have sex with that person”. Many asexual people do experience romantic attraction, despite not experiencing sexual attraction. Words like “heteroromantic”, “homoromantic”, “panromantic”, and so on, allow an asexual person to describe their feelings more completely. Some people may describe themselves as “aromantic”, which is the romantic orientation characterized by a persistent lack of romantic attraction toward any gender.

Related Identities

When discussing or researching asexuality, the following identities are likely to come up. These identities, along with asexuality, comprise what is called the ace spectrum. It is important to recognize them and to understand that they are just as valid as asexuality is.

Gray-Asexuality is a term that covers a range of experiences that are similar to asexuality, but where the person does not feel the asexual label fits them.

Demisexuality is where someone never feels sexual attraction until they have formed an emotional bond with another person.