

Ace Inclusivity: Acknowledging the Diversity of Aces in LGBTQ Spaces

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ace-toronto.tumblr.com
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Acknowledgement of Stolen Land

Respect Guidelines

- Avoid things like racism, disableism, heterosexism, transphobia and/or gender policing
 - Take “call-outs” (or re-framing) gracefully
- Respect everyone's self-described identity
- Avoid asking questions about facilitators' bodies
- Speak from your own experience;
 - Do not speak *for* others / *for* a group

Asexual: no sexual attraction
(and/or no partner-focused sexual desire)
— may or may not experience romantic attraction

Grey-asexual/Greysexual: some sexual attraction
Demisexual: sexual attraction only after intimacy

Non-asexual allies
(“sexual” or “allosexual” or “zsexual”)

Community
“ace” for everyone on the asexual spectrum

The Unassailable Asexual

- Often people don't believe that a particular person is “really” or legitimately ace
- The Unassailable Asexual is the ace person who gets to be believed...
 - This ace person fits the societal standard for the “ideal normal person”
 - Their only “deviance” is their aceness
 - Ties in with social structures of power
- Whose aceness gets to be treated as legitimate?

Aces are assailable
for not being (sufficiently)...

- Hetero & cisgender

Romantic Orientation Diversity

AVEN Census—2014; N=10,880

- About 60% zedromantic / romantic

- Biromantic (bi) & panromantic (pan).....32%
- Heteroromantic.....22%
- Homoromantic (gay or lesbian).....5%

- About 40% on the aromantic spectrum

- Aromantic (aro).....19%
- WTF-romantic.....5%
- Other (e.g. no romantic orientation).....15%

- About 15% greyromantic (another 34% unsure)

Note: 25% non-binary (28% gender other than assigned)

Aces are available for not being (sufficiently)...

- Hetero & cisgender
- “Asexual enough”

Asexual Spectrum: Grey Zone

- Not always clear-cut or a simple spectrum
- Demisexual & Grey-sexual or grey-aseexual
 - May identify strongly with asexuality but still sometimes experience sexual attraction OR
 - May experience sexual attraction but not sexual desire (and not interested in sex) OR
 - May enjoy or desire sex but only under specific (rare) conditions
- Demi-romantic & grey-romantic

Aces are assailable for not being (sufficiently)...

- Hetero & cisgender
- “Asexual enough”
- Comfortable or experienced with sex OR repulsed by or inexperienced with sex

How do aces feel about sex?

- 65% have never had (consensual) sex
- 12% currently sexually active

(AVEN survey, 2014)

- 4% want to have sex (mostly demis & greys)
- 17% “completely repulsed”: 13% might compromise
- 38% “somewhat repulsed”: 65% might compromise
- 27% “indifferent”: 94% might compromise

(AAW, 2011)

Aces are assailable for not being (sufficiently)...

- Hetero & cisgender
- “Asexual enough”
- Comfortable or experienced with sex OR repulsed by or inexperienced with sex
- Involved in the “right kind” of relationships

Ace people's relationships

- Friendships
- Families (of origin, created and found, etc.)
- Community relationships

- Maybe romantic relationships
- Maybe intense “non-normative” relationships
 - queerplatonic (or quirkyplatonic)...
“zucchini”
 - Not romantic relationships but also...
 - Not adequately expressed by “friendship”

When ace people date...

- Relationships: monogamous or poly
- Asexual or non-asexual partners
 - online/long-distance with other aces
 - “mixed” relationships (with a non-asexual partner)
- Sometimes these relationships are celibate
- Sometimes ace people have sex
 - “Compromising” to have sex is often a problem
 - Social expectations & pressure vs. Consent
 - If you don't **really** feel you could say no & believe that it would be okay... then it's not consensual

Aces are assailable for not being (sufficiently)...

- Hetero & cisgender
- “Asexual enough”
- Comfortable or experienced with sex OR repulsed by or inexperienced with sex
- Involved in the “right kind” of relationships
- Compliant about accepting societal-level hypersexualisation and/or desexualisation
 - Issues of racism & colonialism, disablism, & marginalisation of trauma survivors

Not everyone has (equal) access to an asexual/ace identity...

- Some aces face other marginalisation that make relating to asexuality more complicated... E.g.,:
- Groups that are hypersexualised or de-sexualised
 - People from racialised & colonised communities
 - People with disabilities / disabled people
 - People with mental health issues / psych. survivors
 - Autistic people
 - Survivors of trauma / violence / sexual abuse
- **All ace identities are valid... respect them**
 - Some people might not identify with ace communities

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 - Issues of racism & colonialism, disablism, & marginalisation of trauma survivors
- **All aces are assailable *somehow***

Challenges facing people on the asexual spectrum...

- Asexuality as invisible / impossible: lack of info
- Homophobia, heterosexism & gender-policing
 - Asexuality-related homophobia
 - Rejection from LGBTQ+ spaces
- Amatonormativity (relationship hierarchy)
 - People not recognising important relationships
- Compulsory sexuality & the sexual imperative
 - Sexual coercion & “corrective rape” from partners
 - “Reparative therapy”... trying to “cure” asexuality

Becoming More Ace-Friendly

- Learn more & offer information about asexuality and the diverse asexual spectrum
- Learn more & offer information about non-sexual and non-romantic ways of doing intimacy
- Accept asexuals with a variety of different experiences
- Act as though ace and aro spectrum people are already present
 - and might not know “asexuality” & “aromanticism” exist
 - Discuss what “sex positive” means in your LGBTQ+ group

Becoming More Ace-Friendly

(and start undoing compulsory sexuality)

- Focus broadly on consent:

- Recognise social-level expectations & coercions
- Legitimise the option of “opt out” of unwanted things

- Challenge values

- It's okay to not want sex
- Nobody can ever “owe” sex-- it's not a commodity
- Unpack relationship hierarchies & amatonormativity
- Unpack “sexual empowerment” (especially in the context of hypersexualisation & desexualisation)

Resources

- Basic info—Asexual Visibility & Education Network
 - asexuality.org (AVEN)
- More advanced discussions—collaborative blog:
 - asexualagenda.wordpress.com
- Collection of Ace Awareness Week (AAW) stuff:
 - aawreblogs.tumblr.com
- For local ace community: Ace Toronto
 - ace-toronto.tumblr.com
 - acotoronto.wordpress.com
 - E-mail us: ace.toronto.general@gmail.com