

Asexuality 101... **for a context of LGBTQ+ spaces**

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April 1, 2015

Respect Guidelines

- Avoid things like racism, dis/ableism, 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

Context: LGBTQ+ Spaces

- Why are LGBTQ+ Spaces important?
- Who are they for?

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- Who are they for?
- It's important for us because...
 - Too few people know we exist and that asexuality is legitimate
 - Too few aces know that there's an ace community (they're not alone)
 - Asexuality-related violence

Context: Sex-Positivity

- What does being sex-positive mean to you?
- Why is this important?

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- Why is this important?
- We're looking for a “sex-positivity” that
 - acknowledges sexual stuff isn't for everyone
 - supports people who *don't* or *don't want to* participate in sex *just as much as those who do*
 - doesn't treat sex as necessary for “empowerment”
 - recognises (& is critical of) compulsory sexuality

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

(“zedsexual” or “allosexual**” or “sexual**”)

**there are problems with these terms

Community

“ace” for everyone on the asexual spectrum

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- Sexual
- Romantic
- Aesthetic
- Intellectual
- Sensual, etc.

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- But it can be hard to tell the difference
 - For some people they match up or overlap
 - For some people they are distinct
- Romantic vs. Sexual

Romantic Orientation Diversity

AVEN Census—2014; N=10,880

- Romantic orientation
 - About 60% zedromantic
 - 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%
- Note: 14% ID as greyromantic (another 34% unsure)

Gender Diversity

- Lots of gender diversity (AVEN, 2014)
 - 25% identify as non-binary in some way
 - Genderqueer, agender & other
- 28% had gender identities that did not align with assigned sex at birth but only 11% ID as trans
 - Of the 25% with non-binary identities
 - 31% ID as trans
 - 41% ID as not trans
 - 28% unsure

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)

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- Not always clear-cut or a simple spectrum
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- 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

Ace people's relationships

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

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- 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)

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- 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

Challenges facing people on the asexual spectrum...

- Asexuality as invisible / impossible: lack of info
- Homophobia, heterosexism & gender-policing
 - Asexuality-related homophobia
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 - People not recognising important relationships
- Compulsory sexuality & the sexual imperative
 - Concept first developed by Black feminists & womanists
 - Sexual coercion & “corrective rape” from partners
 - “reparative therapy” – trying to “cure” asexuality

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

- Some aces face other marginalisation that make relating to asexuality more complicated... E.g.,:
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 - People with disabilities / disabled people
 - People with mental health issues / psych. survivors
 - Autistic people
 - Survivors of trauma / violence / sexual abuse

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- **All ace identities are valid... respect them**
 - Some people might not identify with ace communities

Becoming More Ace-Friendly

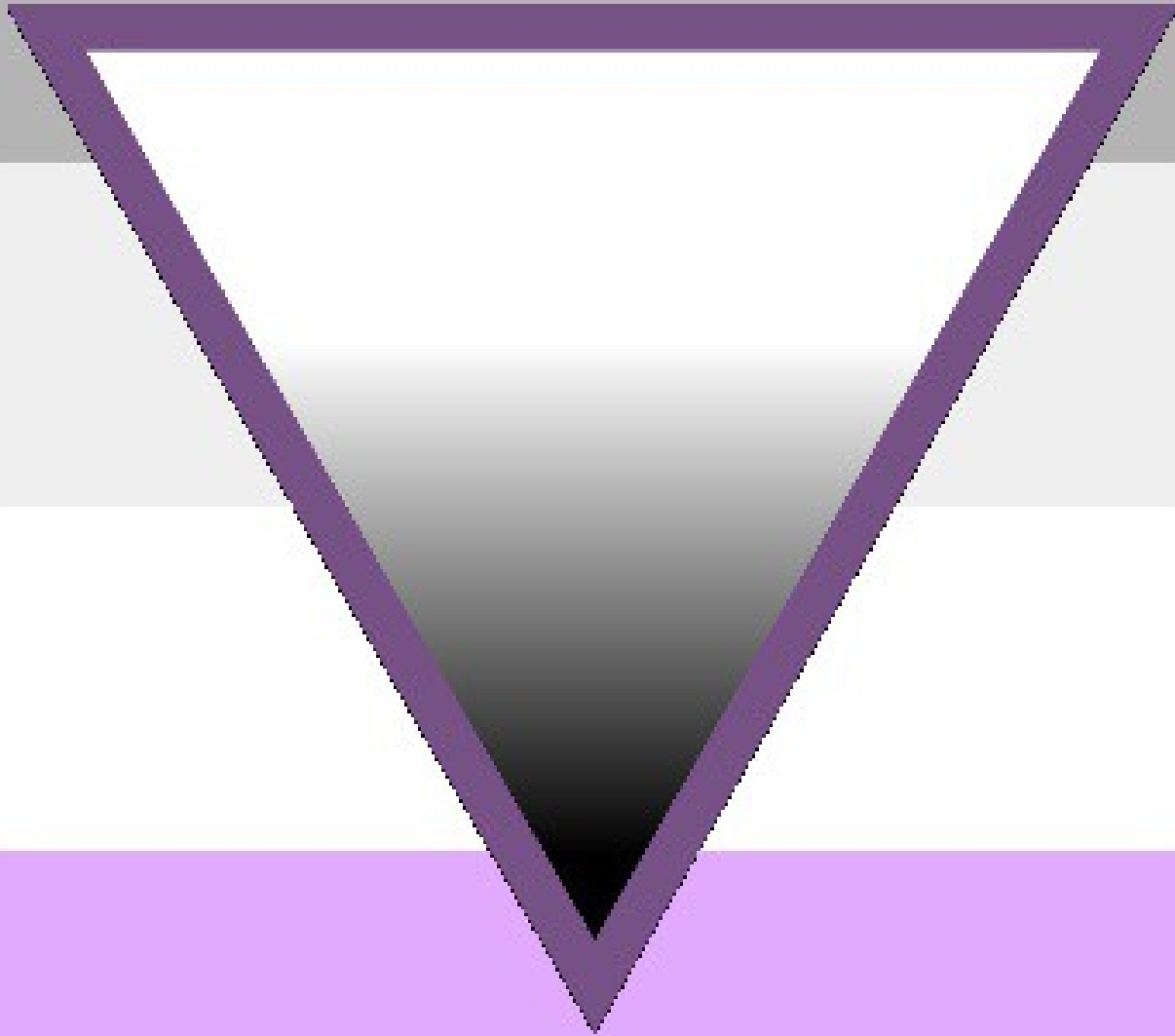
- Learn more & offer information about asexuality and the diverse ace spectrum
- Learn more & offer information about non-sexual and non-romantic ways of doing intimacy
- Accept asexuality regardless of “cause”
- Act as though ace and aro spectrum people **are** already present
 - and might not know “asexuality” & “aromanticism” exist

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)

Questions?



Brainstorming Activity:

- 4 social ideologies
 - Compulsory Sexuality
 - Amatonormativity
 - Relationship categories & hierarchies
 - Sexual compromise & sexual obligations

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 - Compulsory Sexuality
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- How does the ideology play out in your own lives?

Wrapping Up...

- How can you broaden your pride organising and LGBTQ+ spaces to include and value people on the asexual spectrum?
- How can you broaden your sex-positivity to include & value people on the asexual & aromantic spectra?

Resources

- For more basic information about asexuality:
 - Asexual Visibility & Education Network (AVEN)
 - **asexuality.org**
- For more advanced discussions:
 - Asexual Agenda collaborative blog
 - **asexualagenda.wordpress.com/**
- For local ace community OR to book a workshop for your organisation:
 - Ace Toronto: **acetoronto.wordpress.com**
 - E-mail us: **ace.toronto.outreach@gmail.com**

References

- Asexual Visibility & Education Network (AVEN) Community Census (2014):
 - <https://asexualcensus.files.wordpress.com/2014/11/2014censuspreliminaryreport.pdf>
- Asexual Awareness Week (AAW) Asexy Communtiy Census (2011):
 - Analysis by Tristan Miller
 - <http://asexualawarenessweek.com/docs/SiggyAnalysis-AAWCensus.pdf>