

WHAT IS BISEXUALITY?

The term bisexual derives from the prefix "bi" to mean two. Historically, this term referred to those who are attracted to two genders, sometimes their own gender and another one. However, there are many bi folks who use this term to encompass their attraction for many or all genders. It is important to note that along with many other identities, this label is fluid and may mean different things to different people.

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WHAT IS BISEXUAL ERASURE?

Bisexual erasure is the dismissal of a bi person's experiences with their identity because of certain normative expectations around sexuality. Erasure can occur explicitly or implicitly in our day-to-day dialogue, or systemically in our communities. Bisexual erasure is a manifestation of biphobia, whereby a bisexual person is experiencing discrimination or oppression because of their bisexual identity. Bisexual erasure can come from what is known as "**monosexism**", the idea that one can only be attracted to one gender. Bisexual folks may face erasure in both seemingly "straight" and queer relationships.

WHAT NOT TO SAY TO A BISEXUAL PERSON:

Subtle Erasure

"Who do you see yourself ending up with?" This is one way of implying that someone has to "end up" gay or straight and ignores bisexuality as a valid identity. It also invalidates the experiences of non-monogamous folks.

"Well, really everyone is kind of bisexual." Though this is meant to acknowledge the fluidity of sexuality, it dismisses the reality of people who identify as bisexual and erases their experiences. It also invalidates the self-identifications of non-bisexual people.

"Being bisexual is so trendy now." Bisexuality is not a fashion statement, it's not a trend; it's an identity. Claiming bisexuality is "trendy" or "popular" erases any form of discrimination that bisexual people face.

"You get to date twice as many people." Someone who is attracted to any given gender doesn't necessarily make everyone of that gender available to them. Stating that bisexual people get to date more folks, again, implies that it's a choice, or a way to get a wider scope of dating opportunities.

Overt Erasure

"I wouldn't be able to trust a bisexual person enough to date them." This statement implies that a bisexual person is more promiscuous than a monosexual person, prone to cheating, or that there are more people to cheat with, making them untrustworthy, and a bad partner.

"It's just a phase/you're just confused!" This is a common statement for bi folks to receive, as many perceive the bi label as a stepping stone to coming out as gay, or even that it's another way to say that someone's "experimenting". Bisexuality is not a phase, or a way to say that someone is unsure of their identity.

"Bisexuals are all kidding themselves. There's really only gay and straight." This is blatantly erasing the existence of bisexuality as an identity, and dismisses the concept of fluidity of sexuality and the ability to self-identify; everyone should be able to define their own identity and have that identity honoured.