Asexuality, Attraction, and Romantic Orientation

Asexual – A term used to describe someone who does not experience sexual attraction toward individuals of any gender. Asexuality is a sexual orientation, and is different from celibacy, in that celibacy is the choice to refrain from engaging in sexual behaviors and does not comment on one’s sexual attractions. An asexual individual may choose to engage in sexual behaviors for various reasons even while not experiencing sexual attraction. Asexuality is an identity and sexual orientation; it is not a medical condition. Sexual attraction is not necessary for a person to be healthy.

- *Gray-A*, gray-asexual, gray-sexual are terms used to describe individuals who feel as though their sexuality falls somewhere on the spectrum of sexuality between asexuality and sexuality.
- *Demisexual* individuals are those who do not experience primary sexual attraction but may experience secondary sexual attraction after a close emotional connection has already formed.

Attraction - There are many different types of attraction, including:

- *Sexual attraction*: attraction that makes people desire sexual contact or shows sexual interest in another person(s).
- *Romantic attraction*: attraction that makes people desire romantic contact or interaction with another person or persons.
- *Aesthetic attraction*: occurs when someone appreciates the appearance or beauty of another person(s), disconnected from sexual or romantic attraction.
- *Sensual attraction*: the desire to interact with others in a tactile, non-sexual way, such as through hugging or cuddling.
- *Emotional attraction*: the desire to get to know someone, often as a result of their personality instead of their physicality. This type of attraction is present in most relationships from platonic friendships to romantic and sexual relationships.
- *Intellectual attraction*: the desire to engage with another in an intellectual manner, such as engaging in conversation with them, “picking their brain,” and it has more to do with what or how a person thinks instead of the person themselves.
**Romantic Orientation** – Describes an individual’s pattern of romantic attraction based on a person’s gender(s) regardless of one’s sexual orientation. For individuals who experience sexual attraction, their sexual orientation and romantic orientation are often in alignment (i.e. they experience sexual attraction toward individuals of the same gender(s) as the individuals they are interested in forming romantic relationships with).

Examples of Romantic Orientations (not an exhaustive list):

- **Aromantic**: individuals who do not experience romantic attraction toward individuals of any gender(s)
- **Biromantic**: romantic attraction toward males and females
- **Heteroromantic**: romantic attraction toward person(s) of a different gender
- **Homoromantic**: romantic attraction towards person(s) of the same gender
- **Panromantic**: romantic attraction towards persons of every gender(s)
- **Polyromantic**: romantic attraction toward multiple, but not all genders
- **Gray-romantic**: individuals who do not often experience romantic attraction
- **Demiromantic**: an individual who does not experience romantic attraction until after a close emotional bond has been formed. People who refer to themselves as demiromantic may choose to further specify the gender(s) of those they are attracted to (e.g. demi-homoromantic).

In understanding identities and attractions, it is important to remember that orientation and attraction do not necessarily define or predict behavior. This is another important reason why it is important to ask people how they identify, as you cannot assume you know someone’s identity based on their behavior. This also means that you cannot assume what types of relationships or behaviors a person will engage in simply by knowing how they identify.

Sexual identities and romantic orientations are not linked and therefore a person could be asexual, aromantic, neither, or both asexual and aromantic.

Many aromantic individuals may still desire relationships and experiences various types of attractions to others.

- One of these types of relationships is referred to as *queerplatonic relationships* (QPRs). Queerplatonic Relationships (QPRs) are those relationships that are not romantic in nature but they involve very close emotional connections that are often deeper or more intense than what is traditionally considered a friendship. Since
there is not adequate language to describe queerplatonic partners, some people refer to these partners as *zucchini*.

- **Squish** is a term used to identify aromantic crushes; the desire for a non-romantic/platonic relationship with another person.

Source URL: https://lgbtq.unc.edu/resources/exploring-identities/asexuality-attraction-and-romantic-orientation