

# ASEXUAL AWARENESS

A BRIEF GUIDE FOR CLINICIANS

Brought to you by Delta Kappa, Zeta Chapter  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

# Asexuality Defined

- Asexual: A person who does not experience sexual attraction to people of either sex (Bogaert, 2004; 2006). There is considerable diversity among the asexual community; each asexual person experiences things like relationships, attraction, and arousal somewhat differently ([www.asexuality.org](http://www.asexuality.org)).
- Prevalence: The asexual community is estimated at 1% of the US population (Bogaert, 2004).
- Asexuality is NOT:
  - ...the same as sexual dysfunction
  - ...the same as celibacy
  - ...an expression of disinterest in romance
  - ...an expression of disinterest in physical affection (cuddling, etc)
  - ...an inability to achieve sexual pleasure from one's own body (masturbation)

# Asexuality in Context

- Relationships: Asexual people have the same emotional needs as anyone else, and like in the sexual community, they vary widely in how they fulfill those needs. Some asexual people are happier on their own, others are happiest with a group of close friends. Other asexual people have a desire to form more intimate romantic relationships, and will date and seek long-term partnerships. Asexual people are just as likely to date sexual people as they are to date each other ([www.asexuality.org](http://www.asexuality.org)). There is also a difference between romantic and sexual orientations - see the AVEN forum for detailed descriptions of these categories.
- Attraction: Many asexual people experience attraction, but they feel no need to act out that attraction sexually. Instead they feel a desire to get to know someone, to get close to them in whatever way works best for the individual. Asexual people who experience attraction will often be attracted to a particular gender, and will identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or straight ([www.asexuality.org](http://www.asexuality.org)).
- Arousal: For some sexual arousal is a fairly regular occurrence, though it is not associated with a desire to find a sexual partner or partners. Some will occasionally masturbate, but feel no desire for partnered sexuality. Other asexual people experience little or no arousal. Because they don't care about sex, asexual people

# History of Asexuality in Literature

- Alfred Kinsey, the well-known developer of the "Kinsey Scale" or "Heterosexual-Homosexual Rating Scale", acknowledged the existence of individuals who "[did] not respond erotically to either heterosexual or homosexual stimuli, and [did] not have overt physical contacts with individuals of either sex in which there is evidence of any response" (Kinsey, 1953, p. 472). In Kinsey's work, these individuals were identified by an "X" and were not included in his erotic spectrum (as cited in Przybylo, 2013).
- The first mention of asexuality in professional literature was in 1977. Harvey and Jean Gochros were the first to mention asexuality as a sexual orientation in their work "The Sexually Oppressed". Michael Storms followed their lead, documenting the asexual phenomenon in his works "Sexual Orientation and Self-Perception" (1979) and "Theories of Sexual Orientation" (1980) (as cited in Przybylo, 2013).
- Very few sex researchers, including Paula Nurius (1983), William Masters et al (1986), and Braden Berkey (1990) wrote about asexuality until the last decade. Anthony Bogaert (2004; 2006; 2008) is responsible for contributing the most contemporary literature on asexuality ([www.asexuality.org](http://www.asexuality.org)).

# Clinical Considerations

- From a clinical standpoint, asexuality challenges the psychopathology of "personal distress" experienced by individuals reporting lack of sexual desire. Prause and Graham (2007) concluded, "if personal distress is primarily due to conflicts with social expectations or worry that a physical problem exists, then a psychiatric diagnosis implying abnormality may exacerbate concerns in an asexual individual. While behavior that is statistically abnormal may be problematic without a person's full recognition of when they are behaving abnormally, as in schizophrenia, it remains to be determined to what extent asexuality is problematic in the absence of individual, personal distress" (p. 353).
- Clinicians should assess for and consider the contextual factors associated with asexuality before assigning a diagnosis of low sexual desire or sexual aversion.
- To date, there are no specific assessment tools for asexuality; however, several established measures may be used to gather information about a client's sexual attraction/arousal history:
  - Sexual Arousability Inventory (SAI): Hoon and Chamblis (1998)
  - Sexual Desire Inventory (SDI): Spector, Carey, & Steinberg (1996)

# Asexuality Education Resources

- "Asexuality - An Overview" (video):  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEeGuCCQ\\_8w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEeGuCCQ_8w)
- Asexuality Visibility and Education Network (AVEN). [www.asexuality.org](http://www.asexuality.org).
- Asexuality Archive. [www.asexualarchive.com](http://www.asexualarchive.com)
- "Taking the Cake: An illustrated primer on asexuality".  
<http://zinelibrary.info/files/taking%20the%20cake%20-%20double%20sided%20printing.pdf>
- Asexuality Common Terminology:  
<http://asexualawarenessweek.com/docs/AceGlossary.pdf>
- Asexuality 101 (includes recommendations for asexual affirmative language): <http://asexualawarenessweek.com/docs/AceInfo-TrevorProject.pdf>
- Asexuality Explorations: [www.asexualityexplorations.net](http://www.asexualityexplorations.net)
- "No Sex Please, We're Asexual" (article):  
[http://www.nzherald.co.nz/lifestyle/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=6&objectid=10455823](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/lifestyle/news/article.cfm?c_id=6&objectid=10455823)
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