

AVENues

Asexual:

A person who does not experience sexual attraction. Unlike celibacy, which is a choice, asexuality is a sexual orientation.

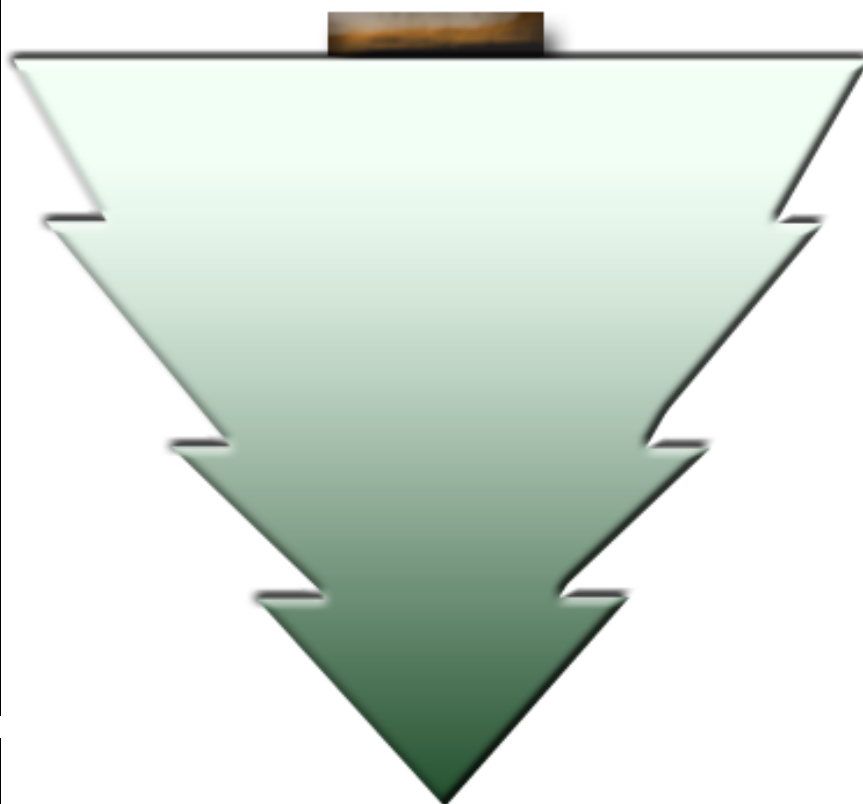
AVEN:

The Asexual Visibility and Education Network, an online community and resource archive striving to create open and honest discussion about asexuality among asexual and sexual people alike.

AVENues:

A new monthly publication available online, created by members of the AVEN community in order to further showcase our thoughts and promote discussion by and about asexuals.

For more information, visit <http://www.asexuality.org>.



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A Collection of Thoughts

by ELI CHRISTMAN

I try to be introspective and refine my values and beliefs on a continual basis. This introspection has allowed me to learn more about myself, which I believe helps me to grow in a multitude of ways.

I would best be defined as "asexual". What does that mean? Dictionary.com defines it as "Lacking interest in or desire for sex." I am by no means downplaying the role sex plays in the relationships most people share, but I think being asexual helps me to attain a higher minded friendship with the people I know. I can honestly say, I enjoy their company - no strings attached, no obligations, no hurt feelings. I'm not sure I could quite pinpoint the "whys," but I have learned to accept it as part of my personality.

Until I discovered that "asexual" was something more than a description for the reproductive process of trees, I thought, "if I don't crave sex what does that make me?" It made me fear relationships; it made me fear marriage. I would be with a group of friends or any guys in general and they might see a shapely woman walk by. They would make some crass comment and ask me what I thought. I would look up, but I honestly never saw what they were interested in - I just see a woman. Not wanting to arouse suspicion, I would typically reply, "oh yeah, nice" in a flat tone and I would go back to whatever I was doing... not even sure if I had seen the same woman that had drawn their stares.

Some people may associate being asexual with being bisexual. They are not the same. The definition of bisexual is "Of, relating to, or having a sexual orientation to persons of either sex; ambisexual." True: in general terms, neither asexuals nor bisexuals prefer one gender over the other; the difference between bisexual and asexual people is that for asexuals, that preference is not sexual in nature. On a personal level, genitalia repulse me.

It is important to note that not all definitions are cut and dried... the line is blurred at best; there are mediums to everything. Asexuals can and do date.

Asexuals are often looked down upon. "You don't date? What, are you gay?" "No - I'm perfectly happy just being alone. Now leave me be." Some asexuals force themselves into a relationship or date because it is considered to be a "social norm," but deep down they feel they are living a lie. They feel they are taking away some happiness their partners could be having with someone else.

It is also important to note that asexual people most likely do crave a "normal" relationship. Asexuals see and hear about how happy their friends are... but they picture relationships like a "G" or "PG" rated movie. They probably ponder, "why me" or dream

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News from December

AVENues is now available in Google Group and RSS form! Be notified of the new issue by email or on your RSS reader. The Google Group emails also contain text-only versions of AVENues, including back issues, for those who prefer that format to our usual shiny PDF. See the AVEN website (<http://www.asexuality.org>) for more information.

David Jay's podcast, "Love from the Asexual Underground," is back again after a long hiatus. You can check it out at <http://asexualunderground.blogspot.com/>

At a recent student LGBT conference in the United Kingdom, an asexual was forcibly removed because asexuality was not on the organization's list of relevant orientations. This sparked an enormous debate on the role of asexuality in LGBT activism, and at the next conference (in six months) asexuality is expected to be a central topic of discussion.

The episode of the Montel Williams Show on asexuality filmed in New York in November will be airing on January 4, 2007. MTV News is also considering filming a segment on the asexual community in the near future.

It has been confirmed by David Jay that AVEN's suspension by its old server back in November was not (as some people have theorized) due to sexually explicit content on AVEN. Bluehost's administration was uncomfortable merely with the fact that the site involved discussion of sexual identity at all.

Meanwhile, for those of you who frequent the AVEN forums, they now feature two new sections. One, "Celebration Time!" is intended for asexuals and allies to discuss accomplishments and joyful events in their lives. The other, "(h)AVEN", is a hidden forum, accessible by permission only, in which asexuals and allies will have a safe, private place to discuss issues such as sexual trauma, violence, substance abuse, and domestic abuse that some asexuals unfortunately face.

THOUGHTS – cont'd from page 2

of holding hands with the object of their desire, but those dreams fall short of the intimate aspects of a relationship - it just doesn't seem important. In reality, intimacy is important for most relationships... and many asexual people end up single because sexual intimacy is impossible or extremely uncomfortable for them. On another level - many asexual people fear being alone... or dying alone.

Some people may get into a relationship for fear of being alone... but it is a relationship based on fear; on some level, relationships based on fear are flawed, no matter how genuine the intent may be. Other asexuals have non-sexual relationships. As long as a relationship is based on communication, honesty and integrity it will almost assuredly be a positive experience.

*Eli Christman's website can be found at
<http://www.elisink.com/>*

Untitled

by JAMES MCKENZIE

But the very first thing was your head
then your shoulders, necessarily,
by me, inside me, in bed.

But then it was your eyes,
your eyes, they'd abandoned nose
and they were more vocal than you,
and it goes,
that if you liked looking with them,
through me,
I could arrange to let you see,
to put your vision to your milk-giving nipple,
and forgetfully sip.

But again, it was your lips that I couldn't sip.
That shut me up
and leave me as I sit
in contrivances, mishaps of words, spoken,
holding no more peace, more than your head,
the white flag is up, or so they said:
"Surrender! Or meet thy knees!"

But your hands, conjunct with knee
spider embroidery,
outstretched, clutched, and said,
to me, warmly intoning
about security and infinity. By the end,
mine perpetually outstretched,
they knew they were speaking to someone else

Food For Thought

Last issue, we asked our readers the following question:

Describe the ideal kind of relationship(s) you'd like to have. Do you crave good friends, nonsexual romantic partners, commitment-free cuddle buddies, sweet solitude, something altogether different, or do your relationships transcend categories? Tell us about it!

Some of the responses we got are listed on the following page.

This month, we have a new question for you:

How has the asexual community helped you out personally? Do you think it gives you perspectives you wouldn't otherwise have? Information to which you wouldn't otherwise have access? Or just the peace of mind of knowing that other asexuals are out there? Let us know!

Send your answers to newsletter@asexuality.org.

I have two ideals for relationships. The first is limited to friendships. I've always wanted an incredibly interconnected circle of friends -- small, but very much united around each other. Secondly, as a romantic asexual, if I could put into two words what I'm looking for in a mate, it's committed companionship. The idea of two people devoting their lives to one another in companionship is a wonderful one to behold. I've always wanted someone who I knew some of the ins and outs of, and someone who knew me -- someone who could tell what kind of mood I was in by the music I was listening to, someone who could tolerate me and all of my weirdness -- and someone for whom I could reciprocate those actions and feelings.

- *smellincoffee*

Bring on the community! I want multiple committed relationships that can weave together and support me in my life and whatever I want to do (family, making the world a better place, etc.) Cuddling, kids, and cooking are all definite requirements. The big thing I'm trying to find out right now is stability. I've got lots of intimacy in my life, lots of relationships with great people, but a lot of people still think of sexuality as the way to create the One Stable Relationship in their life, in my ideal relationship(s) I would find a way to break through that.

- *DJ*

Ideal relationship, eh? I'm not sure how to describe it. I guess what I want is a soulmate on a level past lust and the physical. Not a sex partner mate since sex isn't even involved, but a soulmate that I can cuddle with, protect (I've always had the desire to be able to protect someone as I've generally seen myself as weak), have fun with, cry with, laugh with, all those mushy romantic things - just minus sex. Someone that's basically a friend I guess, but a very deep form of a friendship, whatever that feeling is called that's stronger than friends, stronger than lovers, stronger than best friends even, that's the feeling I want to get one day with someone. Love on the level of the soul, that's what I'll wait for.

- *Chey*

Food For Thought answers belong to their respective authors and do not necessarily express the official views of the Asexual Visibility and Education Network.

I don't really know what I'm looking for, I think it's friends. I'm an aromantic asexual, so I wish I had some friends to hang out with who aren't members of my family. My sisters are great, but they have their families to worry about.

My best (only?) friend from college has been in New Jersey for 17 years and I don't get to see him much, just when he comes back to KC to see his family. We talk every couple of weeks, but it isn't the same as a face-to-face encounter. I finally "came out" to him when I saw him this fall and he didn't have any problems or questions about it since our relationship has been platonic since the first. Which is funny, because my family always used to ask, "When are you going to marry R___?" At the time I didn't realize I was A, but I knew that our friendship was worth more than a marriage. I used to reply that we would kill each other if we had to live together, since a lot of our tastes and habits are very different.

- *2tabbymom*

I don't really have an ideal kind of relationship, because I don't view one type of relationship(s) as being the central focus of my emotional life. Instead, I have a web or network or community of relationships, each one of which adds to my life in a different way. Each relationship is at least a little bit different from the next, and some are completely different from others. They each sort of take on different roles in my life, just as I play a different role in each person's life. I have some people in my life with whom I only do a thing or two with - a lot of people in my life are purely friendships I've made through music, and only see when I'm playing or going to shows. Other people I work with and have formed close relationships with that involve some sort of intimacy and trust. Still others are very much a central part of my life - I talk to them almost everyday, and see them at least a couple of times a week. Some of my relationships involve physical intimacy and some do not. Everything depends on what we're comfortable with and what boundaries, if any, we establish for that individual relationship.

- *ghosts*

From the Forum

A selection of posts from the discussion boards on the AVEN website.

So... I talked to him about some things that you had said. I expected it to bother him a bit, but actually it didn't. He said that he's lately found sex really distasteful because of the way it bothers me, and the pressure he's been putting on me. He said he sees his use of sex as a crutch as corrupting our relationship (and I agree, but I didn't think he noticed). So, for at least the next while, we are a celibate couple!

No exact definition of how long that will last, but probably for a while, and then we'll see how comfortable each of us is feeling. I'm pretty excited about this. While having a relationship without sex wasn't actually my goal, having that pressure taken off me feels so good. And it feels like getting back to what was exciting and fun about our relationship when it first started. Now kissing is something fun on it's own, not something that leads to sex. And now we can spend lots of time together trying other fun things to do. (Not that it was taking up all our together time, but with the arguments as well, that's a reasonable chunk of time that's now free). Recapturing the romance, I love it (I'm a sucker for romance).

Wow.

- ewallace, Fri Nov 24, "He's putting lots of pressure on me" in Asexual Relationships

AVEN is an incredible place filled with some of the most perceptive, intelligent and kind-hearted people that I've come across in several years. It didn't just give me answers and a sense of self-acceptance - which would have been enough - it got me out of a deepening shell and actually wanting to be out there in the world again. Before I saw that 20/20 piece I was too afraid to use the internet (kind of hiding from someone who wishes me dead). But the people and the discussions they were

having kept pulling me back and forced me to confront my fears. Well, to choose my self over fear. That's something to celebrate. Almost every time I log on I come across a post that improves me in some way. Sometimes it might just be because I laughed really hard for the first time all day. Or because someone's insight opened my own eyes. Basically you guys have restored my faith and excitement about the world outside my apartment.

- fern, Tue Dec 05, "Love letter to AVEN" in Celebration Time!

Everyone is different. From the way we are wired to our experiences. For some sex is going to be an amazing, emotional, exciting feeling and for others jumping out of a plane or playing a piece of music or communicating an idea or watching a sunset or worshipping a God will be like nothing else.

And all of these experiences can be just as connecting to another individual when done in unison that sex is not the only way, and not necessarily even the best way, to "get" each other on a deep level.

It is demeaning to tell someone they are missing out on something if they also believe that means they are less of a person because of it. But it is true. The truth is, we are ALL missing out on SOMETHING - because we are all made so differently. That's just life... and we should celebrate what it is we enjoy instead of trying to get everyone to get on the bus for the same thing.

Its because sex is so physically intense that I believe asexuals have so much to offer the world in terms of how amazing OTHER things can be.

- Orbit, Thu Dec 07, "Podcast #12 - Is Sex Magic?" in Asexual Relationships

From The Forum posts belong to their respective authors and do not necessarily express the official views of the Asexual Visibility and Education Network.

*Have you read anything well-put, thought-provoking, or otherwise neat on the Internet that's to do with asexuality or the asexual community? **Send it in** to newsletter@asexuality.org! We're always looking for new "From The Forum" material.*

Featured AVENite: “Charlie of the Opera”

A personage from the forums that you'd like to get to know better

Name: Amanda

Age: 16 (going on 17)

Location: El US of A

Preferred Label(s): If you choose the first name that came to your head, and your voice (if you're speaking this) is directed towards me, I *will* answer. It's strange. It's also why some of my friends have begun to call me Balthazar...

Bio: When I was younger, I never really thought I was asexual. I was one of those kids who just went along with everything, too afraid to voice my opinion or be different. I always thought it was strange that people had sexual feelings, but I figured that I just grow into them eventually. But, when I found AVEN, it was like looking at something that I had written, because it described me so well. So, I jumped right into the AVEN forums.

How she came to AVEN: I saw a banner in someone's signature on Gaia (www.gaiaonline.com) that mentioned asexuality in a way that I had never seen before (like, asexual reproduction). So, I googled it and found AVEN.

The most important thing about AVEN: The one thing I love about AVEN is how accepting and fun everyone is. Like, if you had some sort of problem, no one would get upset at you, and would treat you as if you're their own sibling/relative. And, if it's getting really stressed, someone else will come and turn it into a joke, and everyone is happy ^_^

Advice for newcomers: Everyone says this, I know, but don't be afraid! We're a really friendly bunch, so you don't have to be all careful and "n00bish" like you'd have to be on other icky boards... ;)

Other Thoughts: Thanks and enjoy your cake!



First Post:

Hello people that I haven't met yet!

This is the Welcome Area... so... I'm introducing myself. Yay!

I'm Amanda, and I'm 16. Is that young for this site? Eh, it doesn't matter. I'm more or less here to 1) learn more about asexuality in general, and 2) somehow figure out whether I'm asexual or not.

I found this site through Google. It was the first one on the list. Yay!

Cause, I mean, I don't like sex. I really don't want to have sex. In fact, it grosses me out just a little bit. But then again, I'm 16. Am I supposed to want to have sex?

But... hmm I should say other stuff about me, shouldn't I? Well, right now I'm reading Monty Python and Philosophy, although I have yet to take an actual philosophy class. I hope to this summer, though.

I'm wearing my fencing shirt, too. I like fencing. It says GIRLS JUST WANNA FENCE on the front, and then my name and weapon on the back. Well, two weapons. I was originally a sabre, but I sucked, so I got moved to epee, where I almost suck. Better than sabre, at least. So my friend took a sharpee and wrote EPEE really big over where it said sabre.

So... uh... yeah...? So, hi!

- Charlie of the Opera, Thu May 04, 2006, “Watch me be the youngest one here...” in Welcome Area

*Do you know people who have contributed to asexual visibility or education – hard-working asexy warriors who could use some recognition by the community? **Nominate them** by sending an e-mail to newsletter@asexuality.org! Their faces or avatars could be in our next issue.*

THE ADVENTURES OF **ACE** BY PARTHENOS



Are you asexual, questioning, and/or interested in asexual topics? AVENues wants your submissions!

Format: Letters, articles, short stories, poetry, essays, comics, photography, visual artwork.

Topics: Asexuality in general, the life of an asexual, asexual relationships, sexuality and asexuality in the media, advice for asexuals, things you've learned about or from asexuals and/or AVEN, asexual humour, etc.

You can also nominate people or posts for our From The Forum and Featured AVENite sections, bring asexual visibility-related news to our attention, answer a Food For Thought question, or make general comments and inquiries.

Send all of this stuff to newsletter@asexuality.org.

IMPORTANT: We really want to hear from all our readers, but some people have not been able to reach the newsletter address. We have not yet pinpointed the cause of this. If we receive any email from you, we will send a reply within 3 business days. If you suspect we haven't received something you've sent us, please contact Hallucigenia (the AVENues editor-in-chief) or a member of the Project Team.