

# 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>



*Asexuals at an AVEN meetup in New York City – photo by GHOSTS*

## Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Asexual?

*An excerpt from the podcast by DAVID JAY*

I want to begin this week by pulling from a post I made on the AVENwiki about collective identity. Basically, I was saying that rather than trying to define a common sexual classification for all asexual people, we should frame asexuality in terms of collective identity.

This means that, rather than trying to think about something that's similar about all of our sexualities - some similar way that we all desire or don't desire things in the world - we should say that asexual people have something in common because we have all chosen to disidentify with sexuality, which is a socially dominant framework for thinking about everything from pleasure to attractiveness to intimacy. Under this collective identity model, an asexual person is anyone who uses the term "asexual" to describe

themselves. The label can only be applied internally. No one has the power to determine a set of criteria to determine who is and is not asexual.

The desire to identify as asexual comes from occupying a very particular social position relative to culturally dominant social ideas about sexuality. This common social position is also the one thing which unifies all asexual people.

Imagine a person who does not experience sexual attraction. Imagine they are put in an environment where they are free to talk about desire and pleasure, pursue relationships, and go about their lives without their lack of sexuality ever becoming an issue. This person would feel sexually normal! They would feel no desire to identify as

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asexual or participate in an asexual community. Under the collective identity model, this person would not be asexual, because they wouldn't use the term asexual to describe themselves, wouldn't be involved in an asexual community, and wouldn't have any reason to have anything to do with asexuality.

Now imagine that same person in a different environment, where they are reminded of their sexuality constantly. In this environment, things like intimacy and attraction are entangled in a set of sexual ideas which have nothing to do with this person's life. The person is constantly expected to be thinking and feeling things which they are not. The second environment could create feelings of confusion and isolation, leading to the formation of an asexual identity, and making the person asexual.

The collective identity model implies that asexuality as we know it is a direct result of culturally dominant ideas about sex which are incompatible with our lifestyle. By going as a community and becoming visible in the public sphere, asexual people will challenge those ideas, changing what it means to be sexual, and also what it means to be asexual.

What that means is a couple of things: that we're asexual not just because there's something internally wired a certain way about us, but because being wired that certain way puts us in a position relative to sexuality in society; and that we're forced to struggle with a lot of things because of the way that the world thinks about sex. It's that struggle which leads us to identify as asexual, leads us to form a community, and really has created asexuality as we know it today.

Once asexuality as we know it today has been created, it's feeding back. It's taking all of this isolation and confusion that was created by culturally dominant ideas about sexuality, and it's challenging those ideas. It's saying,

"You know what, we were confused and isolated for a while, but now we actually know how to think about this. Now we have a whole set of new ideas for thinking about sexuality and how to live a good, complete, happy life without it, that the culturally dominant ideas about sex just don't allow for."

I want to bring this up in part because I think that gaining understanding of that amorphous social thing which led us all to identify as asexual in the first place, and which is now something that we're increasingly beginning to butt heads with as we get more and more visible in the world, I think that gaining an understanding of that thing is going to be important, whatever different people decide to call it. In order to talk about what that thing is, I want to pull on a quote from a couple of podcasts ago:

"I have to confess that the whole concept of it frightens me. Not that they frighten me, but because so much of my self-identity is wrapped around my sexuality."

That was a quote from Graydancer in the very good podcast Polyamory Weekly, in a discussion that they had about asexuality. At the time, I caught this out because I thought, and still think, that it's a very important thing to look at. Why would a sexual person feel afraid of asexuality? The reason that Graydancer gives, if I understand it correctly, is that he's so used to thinking about sexuality as a core component of his life and his identity that he can't really imagine what it would be like to live without it. Asexuality is unknown, unexplored territory, and because it's unknown, unexplored territory, it's scary.

I think that this is a really common component of the reaction that sexual people have to asexuality, and another facet of this social thing which is what has put us asexual people in the common position that we're in.

*Please see PODCAST on page 4.*

## News from September

The newest resource on asexuality is the AVENwiki – [www.asexuality.org/wiki/](http://www.asexuality.org/wiki/) Still heavily under construction, this Wiki is planned to be used in the future as a repository of general information about both asexuality and the rest of AVEN (and anyone can help write!)

Clips from the 20/20 special on asexuality are being shown to classes at the University of Washington, including LGBTQ Studies, Introduction to Sociology, Sexual Politics, and Queer Communities.

David Jay gave lectures on asexuality at the University of Missouri this month and will soon be giving similar lectures at the University of Delaware. Following this lecture, he will be posting his notes for future use by other visibility workers on the AVENwiki. He has also recently done an interview for the European newsmagazine "Paris Match".

Texas A&M University has working with Dargon (formerly of the AVEN Project Team) to update some of their educational materials to include asexuality. Wilfrid Laurier University in Canada and the University of Nebraska at Lincoln have also shown interest in gaining more information about asexuality, and other lectures and outreach programs are being discussed.

German and Swiss television stations are now in contact with the German-language section of AVEN. Spanish-language television is also doing a story on asexuality in the US.

## From the Forum

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

I have also found people incredibly attractive, it was why I denied my asexuality for a while. I thought I thought I had a crush on the following: Jack Sparrow, Anakin Skywalker, (the Hayden Christiansen one) Legolas, Arwen, Severus Snape, etc.

But then I realized if I went with that leap in my chest, I also had crushes on these: Danny Elfman music, all the house elves in the Harry Potter book, the movies Big Fish, Finding Neverland and Star Wars, etc.

So I concluded I just liked them a lot.

*-lockshockbarrel, Mon Aug 21, "Finding People Physically Attractive" in Asexual Q&A*

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I can find people to be very attractive, but that's pretty much where it ends. If given the chance, I wouldn't have sex with them. But yes, I can definitely acknowledge and appreciate when someone is attractive.

I even tend to develop crushes quite often, but it's more like "Man, I really wish I could know more about you and possibly befriend you." as opposed to "Man, I really wish I could get in your pants."

... For me, people that I find attractive are essentially nice to look at and talk to, but not to touch. Even though I'd like to establish some sort of relationship with the person, sex (or any physical activity for that matter) really never factors into it.

*-EowinEla, Fri Aug 25, "Finding People Physically Attractive" in Asexual Q&A*

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I was getting ready to leave the apartment this morning and thinking, "I never have to have sex again and anyone I might meet will just have to be special enough to deal." It was such a liberating feeling to be able to say that to myself. In the past it would have sounded more like "wouldn't it be great if I never had to have sex again."

I'm wondering now why I never gave myself the choice not to have sex. Somehow I grew up just accepting it was something everyone HAD to do. I even considered being a nun when I was eleven because I thought they were the only women who didn't have to do it. (But that would have been as big a lie - for me - as having sex)

I read a lot of posts from people who have never had sex

and I'm in awe of their strength of character and willingness to accept themselves despite tremendous pressure from all around. The more I read, the more I learn how better to accept myself too.

And I'm wondering how many others out there have done what I did - basically spent years trying to 'get over' asexuality for the sake of getting along, not even aware that there was another choice...

*-fern, Thu Sept 07, "Why didn't I know there was a choice?" in Asexual Q&A*

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Asexual elitism is one of those things that pops up every now and again on Aven - sometimes including a 'holier' and less likely to sin tag to it.

I don't agree, and I really dislike it...

Whatever 'sexual' you are doesn't give you anymore brownie points in the 'good' count, it's what choices you make that make you a decent person or not. You can use whatever excuses you want to make bad choices, and whatever emotions or urges you have to justify them, but it's the CHOICE that matters, not the sexual desire.

Many asexuals (myself included) have done things sexually that they regret based on emotional needs or peer pressure - and the lack of sexual attraction didn't stop us. In the same way, many sexual people choose to not give in to every urge and would rather make wise decisions as to whom to be with and when.

One thing I do think that asexuals have to offer is a unique perspective on the importance of sex in relationships. In the same way someone who doesn't have vision can show the awesome non-visual abilities of the human, asexuality can show the other important aspects of human relationships and passions that can go unnoticed in a very sexual dominated society. (as well as make sexuals appreciate their sexual attraction in a new way).

But our being 'asexual' makes us no more special than a blind or deaf person... and despite what some sexuals think, sexual attraction is much less necessary to life than vision or hearing.

We aren't better or worse, we're just different.

*-Orbit, Mon Aug 28, "Asexual Supremacy!" in the Hot Box*

**PODCAST** – *continued from page 3*

I want to read quickly from the very beginning of the book proposal that I've been working on with Keith:

"Most people assume that everyone likes sex. This is, in part, because living without sexuality seems impossible. Sexuality motivates the clothes we put on in the morning, the things we eat for breakfast, and the way that we think about the strangers we walk past on the way to work. It frightens and intrigues us as children. It tortures us during our adolescence, and ushers us into adulthood. It is there in the things that make us laugh,

the reasons we give and deny respect, the loneliness we feel, and the morals we adhere to. Most of all, sexuality is intertwined and so powerful are the combined forces of sexuality and love that, to many, they represent the pinnacle of human experience."

So where does asexuality fit?

With the way that most people think about sex, asexuality flat-out can't exist. By existing and living our lives, and reaching our own pinnacles of human experience, we're making a lot of people ask a lot of questions about the role that sex plays in the world,

and that can be a very confusing and very scary thing.

The question we should be asking ourselves is: What if it weren't scary? How is this fear of living and loving without sexuality impairing sexual people? What would their lives look like, and what would the world look like, if we could help them get over that fear?

It's worth considering.

*This podcast, "Love from the Asexual Underground, can be accessed at <http://asexualunderground.blogspot.com/>*

## Featured AVENite: "AVENguy"

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

**Name:** David Jay

**Age:** 24

**Preferred Label(s):** DJ, AVENista, nonprofiteer

**Bio:** I've been trying my best to keep up with AVEN since its founding, acting as everything from an admin to a visibility coordinator to a poster child. The community has been a extremely valuable part of my life from the beginning, I am constantly in awe of the deep relationships and the powerful ideas that are germinating there. Currently I split my time between managing media, outreaching to organizations and campuses, webmastering and working on the book proposal.

**How he came to AVEN:** After spending years identifying as asexual I knew I couldn't be the only one. My research just turned up articles on plant life. In 2001, a friend



from California told me about a new search engine called "Google", and I used it to find my first article on asexuality. That week I put up the first version of the AVEN website.

**The most important thing about AVEN:**

If my visibility work has taught me one thing, it's that the world is ready to seriously question the role that sex plays in intimacy and fulfillment. I think that AVEN is in a position to lead that discussion.

**Advice for newcomers:** Cake! (Is there any other answer?)

Seriously: Be open, be honest, be yourself and have fun.

**Other thoughts:** I can't emphasize enough how amazing AVEN is. I want to thank all of the work that people put in to maintaining and growing the forum on a daily basis, especially the Admod and Project Teams.

**First post:**

Hello and Welcome!!

This is David Jay, aka BloodyRedCommie, creator of AVEN and general asexual troublemaker. For those of you who are new, this forum is going up as an alternative to the original Haven for the Human Amoeba. I want to welcome everyone, both Amoeba folks and

those coming new to the site. Make yourself at home!!

- *Thu May 2002, "Welcome!!" in Asexual Musings and Rantings.*

**Latest post (as of press time:)**

*DJ's latest post was an announcement of a new episode of "Love from the Asexual Underground".*

## Cryptosexual

*a poem by HU*

Hi,  
I'm new here.  
Thanks for the cake.  
I'm new here but I've been here all along, in  
the air, in the streets, on the 'net, beneath a  
tree on the plains

but

I knew I was the only one, with a clarity I  
have not since regained  
as if told by the angels I knew  
I disregarded much else that I knew, of  
statistics,  
of standard deviations and the inevitability of  
outliers  
of biology and sociology, of the undeniable  
(almost, but not quite) diversity of the human  
condition

Not me, I was an island, strange and pointless  
like Nauru

I coined a term:

(it seems a shame to toss it out now-- it was a  
good term:)

Cryptosexual

I'm not, no, not that either, keep guessing  
just treat me how you like, treat me as your  
opposite  
okay you can stop guessing now  
okay fine it's your headache

I felt sorry for the Sphinx, the Nazca Lines  
People don't like enigmas  
sure we watch the TV documentaries but  
there's no warmth in our x-ray eyes  
we resent those who keep secrets, especially  
when the answer isn't what we'd like  
(it's just a stone lion, it's just a big picture of  
a bird, I really just prefer cake)



*photo by GHOSTS*

Crypto: I would send messages, drop hints  
reading out codes on a low-watt radio, playing French Resistance  
pretending my secret would be my ruin, my dreams were crimes  
I took myself too seriously  
it got old.

So fine, here I am, here we all are. Hi.  
Why not? There are new discoveries every day.  
Why just last month they discovered some dark matter and lost Pluto.  
We can be the next big thing, we can enter the encyclopaedia and be  
taken for granted like the rest.  
We'll be real, in the index, like Asiatic bears and Asiago cheese and  
ASEAN, and forgotten most of the time.  
So let's carry on in public,  
take it out into the streets (as lewd as that may sound)  
stop pretending we're so damned special and start acting just like  
everyone else, which is what we are.  
Act casual.  
Confidence belongs to the genuine.  
Cut me another slice, won't you?

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

**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, or make general comments and inquiries.

Send all of this stuff to [newsletter@asexuality.org](mailto:newsletter@asexuality.org).