

Myths & Realities of Bisexuality

Adapted from “Myths/realities of bisexuality” by Sharon Forman Sumpter in *Bi Any Other Name*

MYTH: Bisexual people are promiscuous, swingers or are just oversexed.

TRUTH: Bisexual people have a range of sexual behaviors. Some have one partner; some have multiple partners; some go through partnerless periods. Promiscuity is no more prevalent in the bisexual population than in other groups of people.

MYTH: Bisexuality doesn't exist.

TRUTH: People who are attracted to both men and women make up 2-25 % of the population, depending on the study. (By comparison: Black/African-Americans make up almost 13 % and Asians 4.3 %.) The 2002 National Survey of Family Growth found that 9.4 % of the population ages 18-44 said they were attracted to both men and women (nearly 13 % of women and nearly 6 % of men) and over 2% specifically identified as bisexual (2.8 % of women and 1.8 % of men.)

MYTH: Bisexual men don't exist.

TRUTH: The bisexual community is full of bisexual men.

MYTH: Everyone is bisexual.

TRUTH: Many people's sexuality is more fluid than their label. But there really are some people who are exclusively gay or straight.

MYTH: All women are bisexual.

TRUTH: Sorry, but not true. Although according to some studies, there are twice as many bisexual women than bisexual men.

MYTH: Bisexuals are equally attracted to both sexes.

TRUTH: Some are, but some bisexual people tend to favor either the same or the opposite sex, while recognizing their attraction to both genders.

MYTH: Being bisexual means having a male and female lover at the same time.

TRUTH: Bisexual simply means the potential for involvement with either gender. Some bisexual people may have concurrent lovers; others may relate to different genders at

various time periods. Most bisexuals do not need to see both genders in order to feel fulfilled.

MYTH: Bisexuals are just on the slow train to Gayville.

TRUTH: Bisexuality is a legitimate sexual orientation which incorporates gayness. Many are quite active in the LGBT community, both socially and politically. Some of us use terms such as "bisexual lesbian" to increase our visibility on both issues.

MYTH: Bisexuals are in "transition."

TRUTH: Some people go through a transitional period of bisexuality on their way to adopting a lesbian/gay or heterosexual identity. For many others, bisexuality remains a long-term orientation. Identifying as lesbian or gay is often a transitional phase in the coming-out process for bisexual people.

MYTH: Bisexuals are confused about their sexuality.

TRUTH: It is natural for both bisexuals and gays to go through a period of confusion in the coming-out process. When you are an oppressed people and are constantly told that you don't exist, confusion is an appropriate reaction until you come out to yourself and find a supportive environment. Also: well-meaning gay friends of bisexuals often tell them their feelings toward the opposite sex are residual and will fade away after spending time in the gay community. So they identify as gay for months or years before realizing they are in fact, bisexual.

MYTH: Bisexuality is not natural, no animals are bisexual.

TRUTH: Most animal species are bisexual in much higher percentages than the human population.

MYTH: Bisexuals spread HIV/AIDS.

TRUTH: Unprotected sex spreads HIV infection--not sex with a bisexual person.

MYTH: Bisexuals can hide in the heterosexual community when the going gets tough.

TRUTH: To "pass" for straight and deny your bisexuality is just as painful and damaging for a bisexual person as it is for a gay person. People who openly identify as bisexual are not trying to pass.

We are all unique; we don't fit into neat little categories. We sometimes need to use labels for personal, political or scientific reasons or to increase our visibility. Acknowledging and accepting the differences and seeing the beauty in our diversity is a wonderful thing.