



Claiming an asexual identity for myself...

helped me to understand so many things:

Why I felt scared and awkward when kissing.

Why I don't want to have sex.

Why I don't want to be in a relationship.

Why dating makes me uncomfortable.

Why I felt like I was just playing the role of a "girlfriend" in a "relationship."

Why these words make me so uncomfortable when they are associated with me.

Why physicalizing feelings usually means ending friendships.

Why I avoided boys who liked me.

Why I was always saying "no."

Please contribute!

Discussion and interaction are so important. Please write to me and share your thoughts about this zine and the perspectives presented in it. I would love to hear from you, and I would like to print responses in future issues. This issue is just the beginning. I am seeking submissions. I am primarily interested in writing from a personal perspective, but will consider anything that deals with asexuality, veganism, and related issues. I want this zine to create a community for vegan food lovers and asexuals. If you are aware of any good resources and communities, please share this information, and I will print it in a future issue.



Definitions

In case you're unfamiliar with some of the terms presented in this zine, here are some definitions to help clarify what I'm trying to talk about:

Asexual = a person who does not experience sexual attraction or desire to be involved in sexual activity.

Asexuality = the sexual orientation without sexuality.

Veganism = a way of living which strives to exclude, as far as possible and practical, the use and consumption of animal products, and all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food or any other purpose.

Vegan Food = food which contains no animal products or animal-derived products, which includes meat, dairy and eggs.

Foodaholic = a person with an emotional/psychological addiction to food, which results in excessive eating for purpose beyond satisfying stomach hunger.

I think I've been asexual for the majority of my life without realizing it.

I was never really aware of asexuality as an option. In this society, we are presumed to be heterosexual until proven otherwise. Claiming a bisexual or homosexual identity often obligates proof or justification (to others or to the self), which is not required of heterosexuals because they are the "norm." But at least homosexuality and bisexuality are somewhat visible options, though obviously not comparable in scope to the prevalence of heterosexuality.

Asexuality is, at least on the surface level, nearly invisible. I searched for books about asexuality on Amazon.com and my university library catalog, and found next to nothing. There is one book about asexual lesbian relationships (see resources, page 18), but generally asexual plant reproduction seems to warrant more documentation than asexual humans who don't reproduce. I searched Google.com, and found a few supportive sites (see resources), but as a non-computer-oriented person, I haven't been able to venture too deeply into the world of online asexual forums. This dearth of print material was part of my motivation to publish this zine, with the hope that there will one day be books published about the personal experiences of asexuals, just as there are books about being gay. I want people like me to have these kinds of resources available, so we don't have to figure everything out on our own. I myself am still in need of this book, but I am working towards it here.

Asexuality and asexual relationships are not really represented in media, or even academic and queer sources, though I will argue that certain media texts can be read as asexual. I plan to utilize my cinema critical studies education to examine such texts in future articles. Although examples of asexual people and asexual relationships may occasionally be present in media representation, they are generally either not defined as such, or presumed to be sexually oriented, or presented negatively. Asexuality is not shown to be a positive, healthy, long-term sexual identity. So I didn't consider it a valid sexual orientation (for myself) until quite recently. I struggled with my asexuality for years. I assumed it was a phase. I

This isn't simply a crush that will be sidelined by a "real" relationship with a significant other who will sweetly tolerate comments like "Jake Gyllenhaal can park his boots under my bed any day." The beautiful thing is, this isn't about bedding anyone, or being with anyone, unless it's being alone in bed and perfectly happy with that. It's not about having Jake and having someone else too, it's about Jake being enough to sustain me. So I don't need to find someone else to romance me, or make me happy, or give me something to daydream about. I have myself, and I have Jake. It's not about Jake holding me back from being with someone real, it's about Jake negating the need for that. It's not about Jake being a substitute, but rather an *alternative*. A more beautiful, perfect, simpler love to fill the limited space I have for romance.

Jake is there when I need him. I can look at his pictures, watch his movies, or pull out his clipping file for instant quality time whenever I want. However, when I don't feel like being with him, I don't have to be. It's so much easier having a "relationship" that only involves one person, and I like being in control. He never pressures me to talk, or discuss our relationship status, or be sexual. I can be completely and totally myself "with" him. It's basically like being alone, but not being lonely.

Jake Gyllenhaal is not my boyfriend, even though I sometimes pretend like he is. No, Jake is my lover. He gives me what I need, and doesn't ask for much in return. His movies give me pleasure that pleases him in return by stroking his star power, boosting his box office cred, and providing more opportunities for him to make movies, which again pleases me. Jake satisfies me in sporadic doses with movie releases and magazine coverage, and leaves me wanting more. He's distant, but I know him intimately.

My lover can have onscreen and offscreen romances and love scenes that don't threaten me, because our relationship is different. He comes around once in awhile, and lets me love him through the safe medium of film and print and imagination. He's there and yet he's anywhere, he's real and yet he's a fantasy, he's flawed and yet he's perfect because I don't have to deal with it. He's the perfect asexual lover, -- a lover who touches without hands, pleases without sex, gives without obligation, and receives without knowing. ★

Dear Jake,
I love you.
xo Star

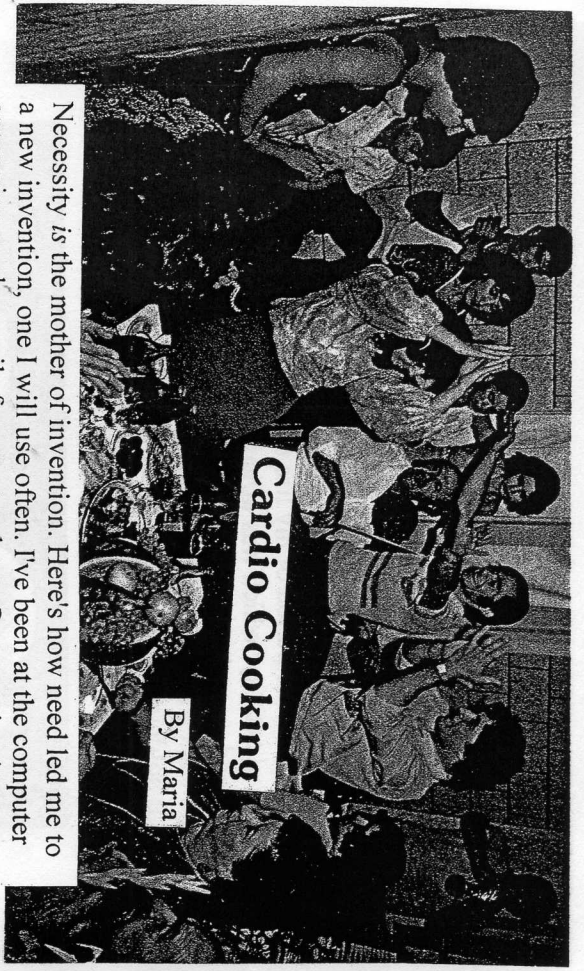


wanted it to be a phase. My sexual desire was missing, and I wanted it to return. I wasn't sexually attracted to anyone, but I pressured myself to feel something even to the point of faking it. Finally I stopped awaiting the return of my sexual desire, and I realized it had never been with me very long anyway. There was about a 2-3 year period of my life that I was actually interested in sexual activity, which was largely unfulfilling. But before that, I had essentially been asexual. I didn't want to have sex, I didn't want a boyfriend, I had platonic crushes and daydreams about holding hands. Basically the same as I feel now! What I thought was a phase was actually a return to form!



Being asexual is kind of like being a little kid. I get crushes on people I want to play with, not people I want to have sex with. Sexual stuff seems kind of yucky, and although I may be curious about it in the future, it's not something I want to worry about right now.

Asexuality is not repression, which infers the suppression of desires. However, if I were to give in to pressure from society and individuals by forcing myself to engage in sexual activity, I would be repressing my asexuality. Asexuality is not celibacy, because I am not abstaining from something I want. I'm not asexual because I can't get a lover. I'm asexual because I don't want or need a lover. I've tried being sexual. I might try it again someday. But I can't force myself to change, and I shouldn't have to change. I'm finally happy being the way I am. My sexual orientation is without sexuality, but I'm not missing anything. ★



Cardio Cooking

By Maria

Necessity is the mother of invention. Here's how need led me to a new invention, one I will use often. I've been at the computer answering work e-mails for way too long. Once again, time got away from me and I've missed the sunniest part of the afternoon to get out for a walk and the physical exercise I so desire. In fact, it's dinner time! I'm hungry, but I'm torn, because I want to exercise. Suddenly I remember the dance mix tape Star sent me. I pop in the mix tape and start to dance through the living room. I start out *She Bopping* with Cyndi Lauper. Wanting to move all of my body, I wave my arms over my head, kick my legs out and swing my hips from side to side and in a circular motion. I dance into the kitchen and pull the box of Amy's California Burgers out of the freezer and get one out. I grab a cast iron skillet, still swaying my hips from side to side, and place it over the flame, rhythmically shaking in a little olive oil. I put my burger in, turn the burner on medium low to give me more time and dance back into the living room, *Devo* style. Now I'm really having fun. My heart's beating faster and I'm feeling pretty great. My cardio is up! With every move, I shed my into-the-computer-black-hole persona with great liberation. The tape sings out "matador, matador" and I feel like a matador of my own life again. As the tape rocks on, I dance back and forth to the kitchen, flipping my burger, getting out the spinach, the tomato, the avocado. Finally I let everything sit while I get in one last dance. It's been a full fifteen minutes and I feel alive and energized. My dinner's ready and I'm ready for my cool down. Swaying my hips from side to side, rolling my shoulders, I chop the garnishes for my burger and pour myself a tall glass of filtered water. Refreshed, hungry, and fully rocked out, I sit down to eat my well-earned dinner. Ah, cardio cooking. I must try it again. ★

I don't seem to be cut out for a conventional relationship. Sure, I occasionally dream of a partner in adventure, cooking, loving... but I can do these things just fine on my own, or with friends. I used to love the song by Bright Eyes that went, "I want a lover I don't have to love." Then I realized that what I really want is a lover I don't have to make love to.

And that's when I realized, Actually, Jake Gyllenhaal Is My Lover

I have long been a proponent of celebrity crushes, because they are easier and more fun than real crushes, without the risk of being realized and ruined. Ever since I discovered my first *Bop* magazine at age 11, I have cultivated one-sided love affairs with pinup after pinup, scavenging for intimacy in the pages of magazines and the magic of movie screens. I first "met" Jake in summer 2002 when I saw him in *Lovely and Amazing*, and soon became a devoted fan, watching his movies, reading about him, pinning his pictures to my wall, and stargazing...

Jake truly is lovely and amazing. He is talented and funny, he can make me cry with a close-up, he's politically involved, he loves food and cooking, he makes provocative and daring film choices. He has given amazing performances in two of the best movies -- *Donnie Darko* and *Brokeback Mountain*, which are so brilliant I can't even begin to explain them here, as well as appearing in some other really good movies like *Lovely and Amazing*, *The Good Girl*, *Proof*, and the little-known 1992 kids movie *Josh and S.A.M.* in which he is so little and cute! He hangs out with the coolest girls-- his sister is Maggie Gyllenhaal and his girlfriend is Kristen Dunst. Oh yeah, and he's a beautiful.

At 3 1/2 years, this is the longest relationship I've had, celebrity or otherwise. You might think I'm being silly. But the thing is, this is real. I'm not deluding myself to believe that one day Jake and I will be together. I wouldn't want him as a real person. I just want him in the pieces I collect -- DVDs and movie screenings, pictures and posters, film characters and public persona, magazine clippings and memories, fantasies and the day I met him in real life.

There were a lot of other factors that encouraged me to reconsider my eating practices, but I'll save those for later. I'm still a foodaholic, and I fight my addiction almost every day, trying to replace quick fixes for healthful habits. It's a process. The tough thing about being a foodaholic is that you can never really quit, because you need food to survive. You have to cultivate your survival techniques, learn to love your body and food and the world with all its living creatures in equal measure, so that your survival does not infringe on anyone else's. It's something you have to learn for yourself. Even when you know you need help, you can't receive it until you are ready. ★



Being Asexual and Vegan Feels Better

In the absence of sex, physical experiences such as taking hot baths and doing pilates are deeply satisfying and sensual. Since becoming vegan, I take such greater pleasure in eating delicious food. The best way I can describe it is orgasmic. These are sensual experiences, full of physical pleasure and emotional love. It's better than sex, and no animals are harmed in the process. ★

How to Eat like a College Student When You're Vegan

There are certain foods that college students rely on for their easy preparation and lack of nutritional value. It's easy to feel left out when you're vegan, especially when your peers are filling their shopping carts with frozen pizzas and sugary cereal, while you spend all your time in the produce section. But it is possible to eat cheaply without sacrificing, well, animals obviously, but also your health and fundamental college food experiences.

Ramen Noodles

Ramen noodles come wrapped in little plastic packages, and you can buy them for 12-25 cents. They're intended to be used for making soup by mixing in the little packets of flavoring, but most of those are meat-flavored. However, you can simply discard the flavor packets and use the noodles creatively.

Miso Soup with Ramen Noodles (serves two)

- 1 package Ramen noodles**
- 4 cups of water**
- 8 teaspoons red miso paste** (you can buy this in a plastic container -- I recommend Cold Mountain brand)
- 1 green onion, sliced**
- 1 half package medium firm tofu, cubed**

These ingredients are handy to stock up on so that you can make this simple, quick and delicious soup whenever you want, especially when your refrigerator is almost empty!

Boil water, add noodles and cook for two minutes. Add miso paste and stir to dissolve. Lower heat to medium. Add tofu and green onion, and continue cooking until everything is warm and good.

Vegetable Tofu Stir Fry with Ramen Noodles and Peanut Sauce

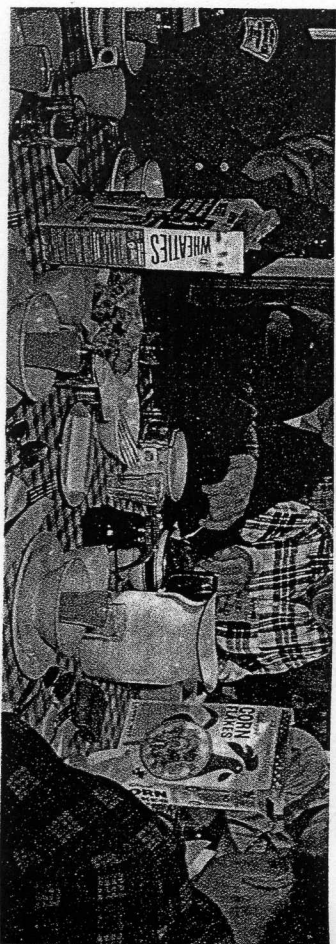
Ramen noodles
a little oil
frozen or fresh chopped vegetables
tofu, cubed
Spike all-purpose seasoning, garlic salt, seasoning of your choice
creamy peanut butter
tamari or soy sauce

Prepare noodles as directed, set aside (you can probably do this simultaneously as you cook the veggies). Bring a pan to medium high heat, pour in a little vegetable or olive oil, and add vegetables and tofu. Sprinkle with spices and continue stirfrying. In a measuring cup or small bowl, combine equal parts peanut butter and soy sauce, then add to veggies. Add noodles (you may need to add a little bit of water so they don't stick to the pan). Stir around until everything is hot and peanut buttery.

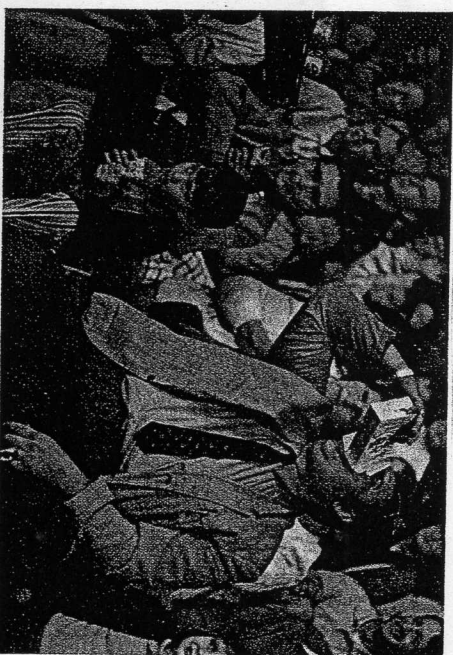
Thanks to Chi Chi for the "peanut sauce" tip!

Cereal

Cereal is good and easy, though I wouldn't recommend eating it for every meal in true college kid fashion. There are sugary cereals that happen to be vegan due to having nothing of substance in them, but I suggest bypassing those in favor of something tasty and comparably healthy. My local grocery store carries Barbara's puffins and shredded multigrain cereal, but you might prefer something else. I also love making one minute oatmeal with honey and cinnamon. And of course, any cereal can benefit from sliced banana and vanilla Silk soy milk!



My realization came a year later when I was in Dunedin, New Zealand. My Kiwi friend Gala had been to San Francisco recently, and she said the plates in restaurants were too big, and accordingly, the portions that Americans eat are too big. I didn't know what she was talking about; I didn't notice that plates in New Zealand were smaller than what I was used to. But then I realized how true this statement is, at least symbolically.



We, Americans as a culture, are greedy and hoggish. We consume so much more than other countries, in resources, products and food. Why don't we realize it's too much? Because that's how big our plates are, but we're the ones who made them that way, and we don't realize our own construction of our appetites for excess. It's what we are accustomed to; bigger is better, more is more, we need *stuff* to fill us. We need more gas to fill our oversized cars, more clothes to fill our closets, more food to fill our hungry mouths that are never satisfied by the junk we keep feeding ourselves.

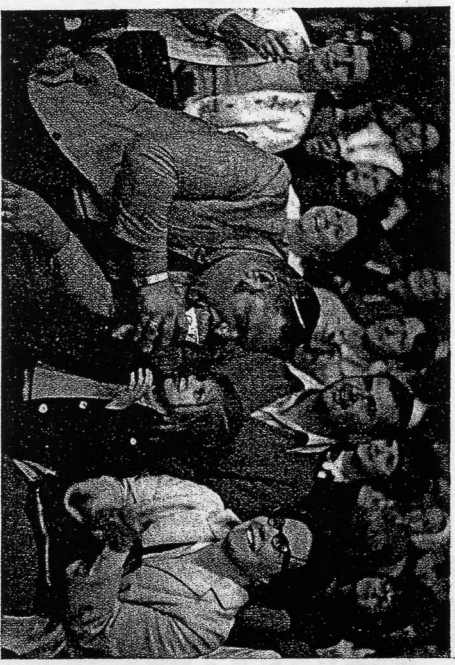
I began to think a lot about excess and consumerism in America, and in myself. I thought I had safely subverted socially-ingrained habits by eating vegan and buying secondhand. But I was still practicing excess and overconsumption in the hoarding of thrifted clothes, the coveting of new-to-me things, and the consumption of food eaten for pleasure rather than nourishment. Having a big plate doesn't mean you have to fill it.

Hi, my name is Star and I'm a

foodaholic. I'm addicted to food. I don't think of this as an eating disorder. It's more comparable to alcoholism. Like drinking, eating is a socially condoned act, and it's hard to recognize when you've crossed the line to having a problem.

There are many factors that led to me becoming a foodaholic, but that's another story. As a second-year university student, I was buying lots of groceries, making lots of food, and eating all the time. This period was dramatized in a short play I wrote and directed at USC, called *Foodaholic*. It was about characters based on my roommate Jenn and myself, and our lives as foodaholics, set in an alternate reality where food is viewed like drugs or alcohol. The main character "Jenn" has a food addiction that sabotages her life, making her a discipline problem at school, estranging her from her parents, and ruining any chance of meaningful relationships -- except with her "eating buddy," "Star."

In *Foodaholic*, an older Jenn narrates her life story from a "Foodaholics Anonymous" meeting. She has come to a realization of her problem after getting in a car accident while eating and driving. When I wrote the play, I hadn't yet reached that point of realization and seeking help, but I knew it would come at some point. In the meantime, I kept eating.



Pizza

Pizza is plentiful at college. In particular, it is often the food of choice at events which offer free food, which makes me sad, but even free food is not enough of an incentive to make me stop being vegan. Some pizza places use vegan-friendly ingredients, so you can get vegan pizza if you skip the cheese (Papa John's is one such place, or check out ingredient listings yourself). But this is supposed to be a recipe for food you can cook, not order! So this is my simple way of making yummy pizzas at home. If you don't have access to vegan cheese you can just skip it.

- pita bread** (I prefer whole wheat)
- tomato sauce** (check ingredients, I use Prego traditional pasta sauce)
- soy cheese** (make sure there's no casein in it, I like ToFutti soy mozzarella slices, but Vegan Gourmet cheese is the best)
- toppings of your choice** (I like tomato slices, mushrooms, bell pepper, sun-dried tomato; and I also like to fry up a soy protein "flame grilled" Gardenburger then chop it up into little "meatballs")
- nutritional/brewers yeast** (optional)

Preheat oven to 400°F. Spread tomato sauce onto pita bread, cover with grated or sliced cheese, and add toppings. Stick in the oven for 10-15 minutes, until bread is stiff enough to hold, and cheese is melted. Let cool, slice it if you want little pizza slices, and sprinkle with yeast.

The Ninja Turtles eat entire pizza slices in one bite.

I love the Ninja Turtles.

