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by articulatingasexual

I started using the term 'asexual' to describe myself about two years ago but only in private. I only shared this discovery with my closest friends. Up until just recently, I'd never thought anything of it.

I figured how I labelled myself wasn't an important thing to flaunt and tell everyone about. More recently, I've come to the realization that I am not comfortable using the label 'asexual' publicly. I've come to doubt my previous justifications. And something tells me I am not alone.

I'm pretty confident with myself at this point in time. I'm confident with my hair, my weight, my academic abilities, my personality, etc. So... why am I not comfortable using this label that I so strongly know describes my sexuality? Why am I terrified of wearing my black ace ring out in public? Why does my stomach turn whenever a friend of mine mentions my asexuality around people I haven't specifically come out to?

Quite a few of my friends fall somewhere on the asexual spectrum. As a result, I'm blessed enough that I have people I can talk to about certain aspects of asexuality and bounce around romantic orientation ideas with. As understanding as my allosexual (non-asexual) friends are, it's nice to have a mini-community of people who can relate directly to me right at my fingertips. However, my mini-community can feel a bit like a curse when it seems like they all embody the ideal person on the ace spectrum.

I know, I know, I know. The unassailable asexual is just a myth. But my subconscious doesn't agree with me. To me, the way they talk and present themselves just screams confidence in their orientations. Have I talked to them about this? No. Could it be I don't feel worthy as an asexual around these people? Is it because I don't wear my ring all the time? Or because I'm not as open about it? I don't really know.

I saw a Tumblr post a few weeks ago talking about how people shouldn't call asexuals "basically straight" because it adds to ace erasure. Unfortunately, I feel like I'm adding to this erasure due to my lack of confidence. Once, one of my ace friends drew the pride flag on my wrist one night, and the next day I got a question about it from someone I'm not that close to. My stomach did a somersault as I explained what asexuality was. They looked incredulous, and a few seconds later the dreaded question, "Are you asexual?", came from their lips. I stuttered out something along the lines of, "I had no idea what sort of temporary tattoo I wanted so my friend just did this" as my stomach churned. I avoided the question.

At other times I just flat out say that I'm straight, to avoid any confusion. A lot of people don't know what asexuality is, and since I'm unsure of my romantic orientation I find it easier to just say that I'm "basically straight" than to explain a seemingly obscure orientation. Is it because of these past answers that I feel I can't truly identify as ace? Or is it the opposite way around? Could it be those incredulous and slightly (though maybe not intentionally) disapproving looks are scaring me into disapproving my own sexuality?

A lot of the fear I experience regarding coming out has to do with the experiences shared by others. “You’re too young to know” or “that’ll change when you meet the right person” or “so I won’t be getting any grandchildren?!” seem to be among the most frequent responses of disapproval. While I have yet to have any terrible experiences coming out as asexual, I feel as if a big part of my hesitation is just the remote possibility of being met with these responses. The most disappointing response I’ve ever gotten was from an old friend of mine who said that they didn’t believe in romantic orientations after I had explained it to them. So why have others’ horror stories scared me so much?

Could it be that I’m not comfortable telling the whole world I’m asexual because I’m not sure if I am? Could it be that since sexuality really is fluid, I don’t feel comfortable committing to a label I don’t know if I’ll still fit inside five years from now? What about romantic orientation? Just because right at this moment I don’t feel any sexual attraction and very little romantic attraction doesn’t mean that I’ll feel this same way in a few years. What if I do meet that ‘one special person’? What if I don’t? These doubts lasted for a while, and every now and then they sneak up on me, however, I’ve come to terms with how I describe myself. Since I’m not the ‘ideal asexual’, should I stop using the label? Of course not, there is no ideal asexual. Since I’m not quite sure if I’ll be the same person in ten years, should I stop using the label? No, of course not. Since I don’t want to share about my sexual preferences (or lack thereof) to everyone in my social life, does that mean I should stop using the label? No. It’s nobody’s business unless I make a point to let them in the loop about it. So why am I still uncomfortable committing to this asexual thing? I don’t know. And I don’t have to know. I’m comfortable not knowing.

So, if you’re reading this article, and are contemplating your asexuality, please know that you’re not alone. If you’re reading this article and have only been using the label in private, you’re not alone. If you’re more comfortable blogging about your asexuality online than talking about it with your closest friends, you’re not alone. If you’re scared about what the outside world will have to say about your orientation, you’re not alone. And you’re fine. Don’t sweat the small stuff, guys. It’s okay to not be 100% certain on the label, and it’s perfectly okay to be 100% certain. Please know that wherever you are in the journey of figuring out your sexual and/or romantic orientation- you’re not alone, and there are people out there ready and willing to help you through this journey.