

Myths and Facts about Homosexuality

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"Kisses between two girls are tough to stomach, not to mention those intimate behaviors between guys. How weird is that?!"

"I don't know how to put this into words. It..it is just awkward to see or think of two women making love."

"Well, I am neither a supporter nor an opponent of gays. It's just that I can't help thinking that homosexuality is unnatural."

Homosexuality

The concept of sexual orientation is crucial to an understanding of homosexuality. First, sexual orientation is an enduring emotional, romantic, sexual, and affectional attraction toward others (American Psychology Association, 2007). If an individual is sexually attracted to a person of the same sex, he/ she is homosexual. If he/ she is sexually attracted to a person of the opposite sex, he/ she is straight. If he/ she is sexually attracted to both males and females, he/ she is bisexual. Second, sexual orientation is a self-identification. For example, some people identify themselves as gay and have sex with others of the opposite sex. In other words, the sex of one's sex partner doesn't determine one's sexual orientation. Third, self-identification may change over time as people explore ways of identifying who they are at different points in their life. Some people may identify themselves as gay early in life and change identify differently later. Other people may go through the opposite process, i.e. from being straight to being homosexual.

Being homosexual can be as healthy as is being straight. Some people erroneously and ignorantly think that homosexuality is a mistake and something society can control like a disease or treat like a mental disorder. Sadly, due to this thinking, many people in a dominantly straight society have developed some negative assumptions and feelings about homosexuality. Prejudices are present both in overt and covert social norms and forms from everyday conversations (e.g., using the word, gay, in a derogative homophobic way), to both psychological and physical distance from gays, and even so far as to the physically assault of homosexual. The following section attempts to dispel commonly held myths in order to help understand choices with regard to homosexuality.

The deconstruction of the myths about homosexuality

Myth 1: Homosexuality equals AIDS

People equate homosexuality with AIDS. Research shows that there are different ways of contracting the HIV virus that may lead to AIDS, e.g. through the exchange of body fluids, the contamination of a blood transfusion, the sharing of needles, and through childbirth if a mother is HIV positive. In other words, getting AIDS has nothing to do with one's sexual orientation.

Myth 2: Homosexuality is abnormal

Some beliefs behind this myth may include the following: "Homosexuality is so different from the rest of the people so it is abnormal" or "God didn't create men and women for no good reason. One of the purposes God created both sexes is to reproduce human kind. Therefore, only the union between men and women is acceptable and natural." When we carefully examine these beliefs, it is not difficult to pin down the illogical elements in them.

In terms of the first belief, the illogic occurs given the fact that minority does not mean abnormality. Homosexuality indeed makes up a relatively small percentage of the population. However, this fact doesn't mean that homosexuality is wrong or abnormal. If minority means abnormal, then should we see left-handed people as abnormal too? As for the second belief, the claim under the umbrella of God's name, there is still something that doesn't make sense. The assumption behind the second belief is that the union can't serve the function of reproduction, the union is not a natural one. If one considers the logic of this assumption as correct, then should we extend this logic to friends who are diagnosed with infertility as "unnatural humans"?

Myth 3: All gay men are "sissy" and all lesbians are "tomboys."

Among heterosexual, some men look more masculine and others don't ; some women act in the way consistent with societal expectations for compliancy, being soft and passive, however, some women act in ways that do not fit these expectations. Diversity exists among heterosexuals as well as among homosexuals. It is unfair and bigoted to say that every gay man speaks or walks in a feminine way. It is also incorrect to assume that every lesbian speaks or walks in a masculine way. We actually can not tell a person's sexual orientation just from his/ her appearance.

Myth 4: Homosexuality means promiscuity.

Sexuality does not equal sex. Homosexual persons may choose to be celibate,

to be abstinent, to be monogamous, to have multiple partners at one time, etc. This diversity of choices occurs among heterosexual persons as well.

Myth 5: Homosexuality can be changed if homosexual people exercise their willpower and choose not to be.

The American Psychological Association and the American Counseling Association strongly oppose this hypothesis. Homosexual people are able to practice heterosexual life styles (e.g., dating partners of the opposite sex). They are also able to embrace their romantic and sexual feeling for another person of the same sex. A straight person may kiss and hug a person of the same sex, and still be in control of his/her romantic feelings for people of the opposite sex. Indeed, people are able to control their actions and their decisions to act according to their feelings. This is very different from asking people to use their willpower to deny their feelings.

There is a saying, "Before learning to be a man or a woman, learn to be a human." Two important matters are worth consideration with regard to this advice. Gender is only one of many ways a person identifies themselves. A loving, passionate and compassionate person's life is fuller when they are not limiting their thoughts, feelings and behaviors to gender-dictated ways of being. Likewise, sexual orientation is also only one of many individual identification processes. It is important not to think or treat another person in a black-and-white way simply based on their gender or sexual orientation. Every human being, no matter their gender or sexual orientation, is full of resources and potentials and, most importantly, needs respect.

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