

There is something wrong with this...



Because I hate sexism, but I don't love sex and that's ok.



A COLLECTION OF TEXTS ON ASEXUALITY
(& ROMANTICISM)
& SAYING NO TO SEX AND ROMANCE

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August 2023



RESOURCES

AVEN, the asexual visibility and education network, mostly english
Accessinarchive.wordpress.com

In english

Zine: Taking The Cake: An Illustrated Primer on Asexuality
Documentary: (A)sexual, not everybody's doing it

Undoing sex: against sexual optimism
In the magazine LIES, relatively academic

Podcast: Sounds fake but ok <https://www.soundfakepod.com/>

Book: Angela Chen: Ace , What Asexuality Reveals About Desire, Society, and the Meaning of Sex

Book: The invisible orientation

Zine: kein Bock, translation of « Lamour, le sexe, pourquoi j'ai deserte », on infokiosques
In german and english

In french

Lamour, le sexe, pourquoi j'ai deserte, trouvable sur <https://infokiosques.net>

Suis-je asexuelle, aromantique, aroace ? GUIDE DE QUESTIONNEMENT AUTOUR DE L'ASEXUALITE ET L'AROMANTISME, sur <https://infokiosques.net>

Asexualité, autosexualité, antisexualité

... une émission de radio sur le site www.radioraguses.net

La fabrique artisanale des confort affectifs :

Brochure sur comment on construit autrement des relations, sur <https://infokiosques.net>

Podcast : Les Nouilles et au Lit, 4 épisodes sur l'asexualité

<https://podcast.usha.co/des-nouilles-des-queues/des-nouilles-au-lit-claire-asexuelle-et-enervee-1-4>

In german

Comics von Liv Strömquist

Zines: Wer A sagt muss nicht B sagen (schwer zu finden)

Podcast der deutschsprachigen A*spec-Community : <https://inspektren.eu>
Verein zur Sichtbarmachung des asexuellen Spektrums <https://aktivista.net/>

And in general, there's a lot of info out there, unfortunately mostly online, but most bigger cities have at least some aro/ace networking group
My contact for questions, recommendations, criticism or compliments about this zine: inswasselpringen@riseup.net

QUESTIONING ACE THOUGHTS PART 3



Paradox

Self-doubt and endless questioning and a nice tea and talk session with one of the best people lead me to the conclusion: "Oh my, who knows, maybe I am not ace, but I really

want to be, because I really don't wanna sleep with people and this would be such an easy and simple explanation for my feelings." In fact, this is an adaptation of the sentence "Hm, maybe I am not trans after all, but I'd really like to be trans, so I can just be a boy."

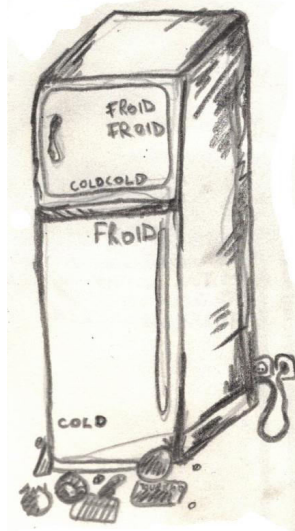
(I know there's no direct connection/parallelity between gender identity and sexual orientation. It still feels fitting.)

Ah, you're ace, so you don't think about sex?

Since I've started to see myself as ace, I am thinking more about sex than ever. All the time I have to stir around in my emotions, in the feelings in my stomach: is this sexual attraction now? Hello, something there? When I see someone I find pretty, funny or just nice and want to spend time with them: what is it that I am feeling, do I want sex or do I just have to piss? And if it is sexual attraction, do I actually want to sleep with someone now? The answer is no. And then I think maybe I am also in my fertile phase or something and I get this weird vague feeling of hornyness, but it still doesn't mean I wanna have sex.

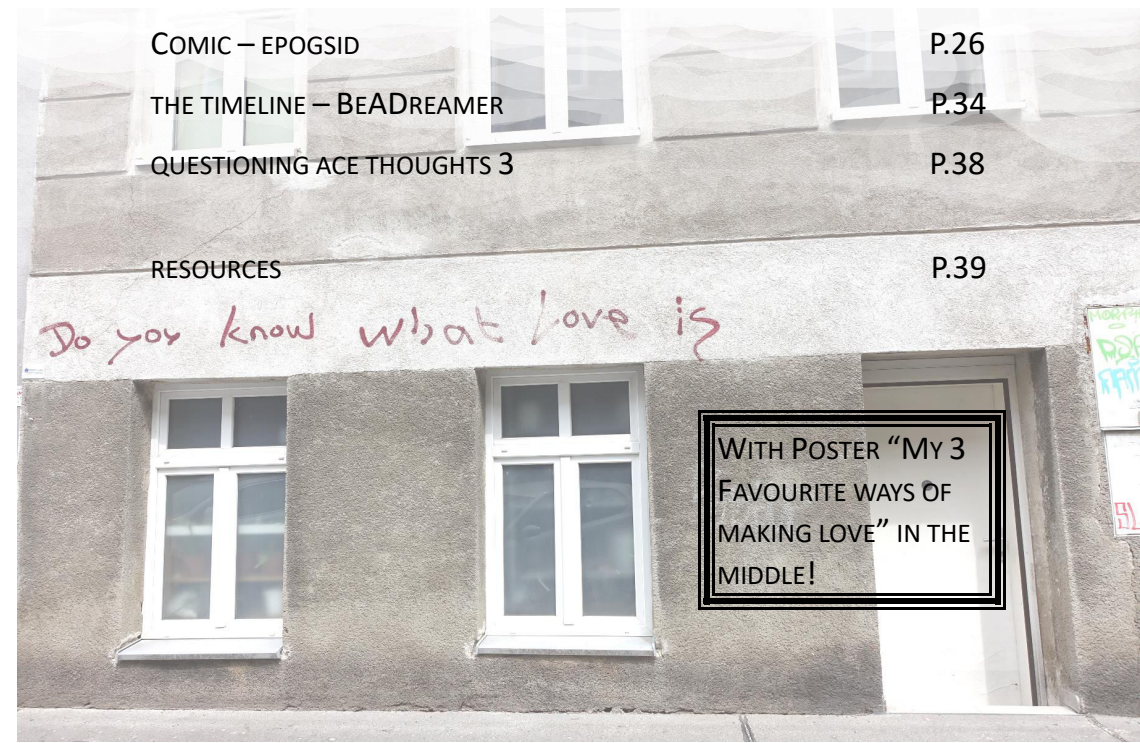
Pros and Cons Lists

On the pros and cons lists I used to write to decide if I should have something with someone (there's way to many of those) a lot of times there is written this on the pro side: is/seems nice, can teach me something about XY (skating, music, growing vegetables...), good at cuddling/kissing and *gaining experience*. What I never wrote: because I want to. In general, this whole thing of collecting arguments to be sexual with a person, lol. I wanted to convince myself, that this was the right person to (always one more time) try it again. Whyever I thought their skating skills were relevant...I don't remember what was written on the Cons side.



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Hello everyone! :

Welcome to this zine about asexuality, a little bit about aromanticism, about saying No to sex and everything that comes with it.

What lies before you is a mix of a lot of different peoples perspectives, compiled and edited by one person. I found most of the participants through this call:

“A few months ago, I translated a French zine about asexuality and aromanticism. Now I feel like I have so much to say about that, that I wanna create another one. (find the first zine and the german translation here: <https://infokiosques.net/spip.php?article1510>)

I want to make a zine about not liking/rejecting sexual activities and about how sexual empowerment doesn't equal “take all the sex you can get”. I know this seems obvious enough, but actually I have the feeling that the viewpoint of asexual people and also people who are not asexual but just don't care for sex so much is sometimes invisible. Also (maybe especially) in the queer scene: sex is somehow

everywhere and seems important to have a fulfilled life and be a “good feminist” (I do realise, there is so much wrong with this sentence... but it describes a feeling I have experienced). Of course, I don't want to devaluate anything that the sex positivity movement or the kink, the queer and feminist movement have fought for. This is just about the other side of things, that is somehow rarely talked about. I am aware that being ace doesn't have to mean not liking and not having sex, but for me right now, this was the logic consequence of discovering asexuality: to stop having sex. And I feel like there's stuff to say. I am very motivated to discuss making more offline content if you have more ideas than fit into this frame.

So: if you can identify with this feeling and/or are ace or just feel like you have something to say: I am happy about making contacts around this topic. Your contribution can be a drawing/text/poetry/story... whatever you feel like sharing. ”

The call for contributions was posted online on AVEN and in a radical mailing list and – pourfi – people were writing to me! I am very grateful for all the responses I got and for how reliable all of you were, thanks so much! We even managed to keep the deadlines, can you imagine! ♣

Physical Intimacy

After nearly a full year of dating, she agrees to let him take her into the bedroom. They undress and get in formation. It hurts. Really bad. She tells him to stop before they make any real progress, and they put on their clothes. They try again a few months later. It works out, and she enjoys herself. Soon, she notices he wants to seduce her every time they're together. Many times she doesn't want to, but chooses to engage anyway. The opportunities they get are already rare, and she doesn't want him to go without. Sex is an important part of a relationship to him.

Distance

He breaks up with her. She has made a career choice that will put hundreds of miles between them. They are still friendly with one another, and she asks if he would be willing to give long-distance a chance. A week later, he says yes.

She moves and begins classes. He begins work as a teacher. They text every night, and get on video calls twice a week. She lets him see her naked before she changes into her pajamas. She won't allow pictures, so he makes an effort to memorize her form to use later that night. She never asks to see him. She is not sure how she should respond if she were to look at him the same way. Naked people don't do much for her, even if he's the man she loves. He's never had an issue with her failure to ask, and she prefers to avoid the awkwardness.

Time passes. The long-distance relationship is working well. There is mutual trust. She can't help but worry though. She doesn't doubt that he is faithful, but rather, that she will be enough for him when the distance closes. Even when they lived near each other, it only worked out that they'd see each other twice a month due to work and other obligations.

He came to visit her. They slept together four times that week. She had had enough after two, but consented to more anyway, not giving any inkling of her disinterest. She tracks her intimacy to help protect herself from unwanted pregnancy, and he happens to be nearby as she's making the final log. He asks about it, and she tells him. “Wow, I thought we would have done a lot more than that,” he says. She shrugs in response, thinking to herself about how that was too much for her. She was willing then, because she knew it would be a long time before they could do it again. The distance doesn't bother her, but he gets frustrated. He doesn't talk much about it, but when it came up, she could tell he was struggling with the dry spell. She doesn't know what the future holds, and tries not to think about it. There's nothing she can do to find out except wait.

The Story

As events like these happen, she writes them down. Every instance is a piece in her puzzle. Collectively, they give her an understanding of this part of herself. She is grateful for the pages that listened to her.

more obvious. Eventually she figures out that she doesn't like him back, but can't muster up the courage to tell him that. On the last day of the semester, he asks her to be his boyfriend. In response, she tells him she's transferring to another university. It wasn't a lie; it had been her plan to transfer before she enrolled there. But there were definitely better ways to handle that situation.

College Part 2

She is all settled into her new dorm at her new University. Mindlessly checking her emails, she stumbles across a particular subject line: Aces and Aros. *What?* She clicks on it. There's a meeting time at the student center. She goes. *These people are real. They have similar experiences as mine.*

The Beginning of the Relationship

After she graduates, she begins working. One day, her sister says, "Hey, my boyfriend and I were talking... and there's this guy we think would be perfect for you. Will you meet him?" She's open-minded and doesn't expect anything, so she agrees. A few months later, she's watching a movie with him and he puts his arm around her. Classic. She sends him a long text message the next day, telling him how she's asexual and on the aromantic spectrum, and that she doesn't know whether she's capable of romantic feelings. He... already knew. Her sister told him, and he also went into the relationship with an open mind and no expectations.

The First Kiss

She is nervous. She has been on several dates with this man now, and she can tell he wants to kiss her. She is not sure if she's ready. Some time ago, they went on a hike. Just as the sun was beginning to set, they reached the peak of the trail that overlooked the entire forest. They sat on a log, talking. It was the perfect time and the perfect setting. She leaned away, and he backed off. They went back down the mountain.

He grows tired of subtle rejection, and the random timing doesn't give her the space to consider what she wants. He gives her a challenge he knows she'll lose. She also knows she'll lose. She considers the offer, consults her friends, and deliberately accepts the challenge. Mario Kart. On a game console she's never used. If he wins, he gets to kiss her. She doesn't remember what she would have gotten if she won, because that's not how events played out. He wins, and they kiss. She...hates it. She can't get over the idea that someone else's saliva is dangerously close to her mouth, even though it was closed-mouth. She considers that maybe they'll get better at it in time, that maybe one or both of them was doing something wrong, and decides later to give it another try. Still gross. He tried using tongue a few times in the beginning and she had to tell him to stop; she was so disgusted with the feeling. Eventually she came to hate it less, but never fully enjoyed it. As the relationship progressed, she began to appreciate kissing not for the act itself, but for the sole purpose that her partner received it as a deep expression of love. She wanted him to feel that.

Throughout the zine I have marked the different peoples voices in different fonts to try to visualize the diversity of perspectives. All images besides the comic are added by me as well. The names of the contributors (if they wanted them to be included) are to be found on the contents page on page 3. Most of the contributors I know and the ones that mentioned their gender in the text, are women. This is not surprising, since it might be even harder for men to accept their asexuality, due to societal pressure, but it's sad that there is yet again a gender imbalance in who feels encouraged to talk about a certain topic. Anyway, I don't know exactly about the identity of everyone contributing.

Since the topic can be a bit heavy at times, I wanted to give some **content warnings** here in the beginning:

Teddy: misogyny, sexism

Aroace and mental health problems: rape, sexual harassment, depression, suicidal thinking

Feminism and asexuality: peer pressure, acephobia in the feminist milieu

the timeline: acephobia, sex

I <3 giving up & Questioning ace thoughts: sex (mentions rape in p1)

Many of the texts deal with (internalised) acephobia or sex in general in some kind of way.

Creating this zine for me was a liberating experience, something I could put all the chaotic creative energy that came from questioning myself into. I am happy that it is done now, and I hope it can contribute a little bit to other peoples lives, if it is by making them feel understood or by educating them about asexuality. It is an attempt to make our experience a little bit more visible.

I think that might be all there is to say!

I hope you enjoy the zine! ♥

-ace-y Ebi





For this part, I wanted to dive a little bit into some of the models and concepts that pop up everywhere when you start to explore asexuality and sexuality in general. For me personally it sometimes borders overthinking to try and relate all of them to my own life, but I do find them useful for reflection. When thinking about writing this text I already stumbled upon some other people's attempts of explaining some of these ideas and so I decided to put their words here as well. (sub-headings are made by me)

First, an extract from *Elle Teas* hopefully soon to be published memoir "My Valdeitic Heart", of that I had the opportunity to be a beta reader.

On the difficulty of a broad definition: asexuality

"Needless to say, human sexuality is not a fixed concept, but it is indeed a concept. Love and sex between humans have indisputably been around as long as humans have, it's only how we have attributed meaning to them that has changed. But I digress. Because of this lack of clarity, and the fact that asexuality is much more complex and nuanced than its broadly accepted definition would lead you to believe, a lot of what I read seemed to conflict or didn't ring totally true. Having only understood sexuality to mean who you are sexually attracted to, I did not grasp that asexuality encompasses much more than that. "Challenging the idea that everyone is sexual, ace online and offline communities also generate other vocabularies and understandings of thinking about attraction and sexuality." All the differences I read about didn't exclude anyone, myself included, so it was difficult to determine where exactly I stood under the umbrella, which terms I related to and how they would/could affect my life. The only thing I knew for sure was that I fit the exact broadness of the definition I just (lightly) criticized for being simplistic (proving that generality can be helpful at times); I had never experienced

brought her to the asexual visibility and education network, where she met a community of other people with similar experiences as hers. She still doubts if she fits there.

College

She dorms, and questions. Almost daily, she is spending her free time on AVEN learning everything there is to learn about asexuality, trying to prove to herself that she isn't. She thought of herself as straight until now, after all. It was hard for her to accept a different self-image. She dorms with the first friend that ever came out to her as gay. By this point, this friend had also discovered that they are genderfluid. Her other roommate, also a friend from middle school, identified as pansexual. Her campus was overwhelmingly queer. Despite that she was scared to confide in her friends that she was questioning herself. Scared they would tell her asexuality was not part of the community or worse - that she was making it up to try to fit in with them. She was the token straight friend; it would destroy their image of her.

Intermission: Telling Mom

Due to unforeseen circumstances, she withdraws from her classes early and applies to a different university. She decides to confide in her mom that she's questioning. She sees a post about national coming out day on Facebook and points it out to her mom in the car. Her mom asks, with a raised eyebrow, "Is there anything you want to tell me?" She quickly dispels her mother's idea that she is about to announce she's gay, and instead tells her she's been questioning whether she's asexual. Her mom... doesn't understand. "But do you still like boys?", her mom says.

"You know, that's normal for girls, right? I mean, with some exceptions. I had a close friend who was an exception," her mom continues. She couldn't explain it well, because she wasn't entirely sure of herself. She becomes frustrated and cries. Her mom doesn't and won't understand.

Validation

A friend is over, and the two are making Christmas cookies and listening to music. The radio sings, "...then pretend that he is *Parson Brown*. Her friend looks at her and asks, "Could you imagine a life of celibacy like a priest?" She says, "I haven't given it much thought, but probably." Then, her friend says something she didn't expect. "You know, I wouldn't be surprised if you were asexual." Was it that obvious? She responds, "I've actually been questioning that for months now. But if even you recognize it, then maybe I am."

Community College

A boy in her acting class starts...talking to her. She gets the impression he's flirting, but tries to pretend she doesn't notice. She doesn't know how to handle that, or figure out if maybe she likes him back. Then, one day, he brings her candy. She thanks him, then panics in her car after class. She can't pretend to be clueless forever, especially not with the signs becoming

The Timeline

Elementary School

A second-grade girl holds hands with her male friend on the playground. Her peers make fun of her and her friend, teasing them for being “boyfriend and girlfriend”. She gets upset because people are lying about her.

The Hot Tub

Around the age of ten, she’s sitting in a hot tub with her sister and mom. They start talking about who likes who. Mom is curious; she knows everyone’s parents. The girl says she doesn’t like anyone, and asks how she would know. Her mom tells her “you just know”. There is silence, and she feels alienated and broken.

Middle School

One of the girl’s close friends comes out to her as gay. She was taught that’s not okay, but questioned everything she thought she knew anyway. Her friend was a good person, so maybe there was something wrong with what she’d been taught. Then she panicked. Was *she* gay? She didn’t know what “like-liking” someone meant. Was it a way to express strong feelings of friendship? Holy crap, all her friends were female. She WAS gay. She could never tell her family. She cried in the shower that night.

Middle School Part 2

She develops a crush on someone. She knows what “like-liking” someone means, finally. She’d been waiting for the day that she, too, would “just know”. She spends all her free time daydreaming about holding hands and talking on the swingset, and school time avoiding him lest she become so starstruck she embarrasses herself.

High School

Her crush fades, even though she still thinks it would be nice to have a boyfriend. She’s touch-deprived, mostly, but mistakes it for romantic longing. At age 15, a romantic partner seems to be the only socially acceptable way to cuddle someone. She sits down and makes a mental list of the boys in her grade she’d consider going out with if they asked. It was a short list, but she never “like-liked” any of them, and they never asked. One day she tries an experiment. She picks one of the boys from the list and tries to will herself to have a crush on him. He’s smart and kind, at least that she can see, and not unattractive. It didn’t work.

Summer Before College

Her sister, for some reason, is talking about demisexuality. She’s never heard that before and asks what it means. Her sister says, “It means someone doesn’t want to have sex with a person until they’ve developed a close emotional bond. It’s pretty rare.” *It’s pretty rare.* Cue the internal panic. Wasn’t that normal? That’s the only logical reason for couples to wait until marriage to have sex, isn’t it? They get married because of a close emotional bond, and *then* have sex. The girl’s world was turned on its head. She looked up demisexuality. The internet

sexual attraction. However, the definition “a person who does not experience sexual attraction” does not explain or define how someone feels about actual sexual experience, which can range from sex-favorable to sex-indifferent to sex-averse, nor does it explain or define how they feel about and experience other types of attraction and ways of connecting in relationships, or put differently, what constitutes love. This is why asexuality is not an easy thing for people to understand nor to identify with at first glance.”

Different kinds of attraction: the SAM

“It wasn’t until I came across the idea that romantic attraction and sexual attraction are separate things that I was able to better understand myself as well as what draws people to one another. Many a-specs use this split attraction model (or SAM) though it is not specific to the community, to further identify their orientation. For example, a panromantic homosexual is someone who is romantically attracted to all genders (meaning they can be in love with people of any gender) and sexually attracted to only their same gender (meaning they desire sex with same gendered people).“

This is where I'd like to jump in to go a bit further on what kind of attractions are normally differentiated. When going further than the binary of sexual-romantic most of the time, these 6 are named:

- ♥ Romantic (wanting to be in a romantic relationship, having a crush, being in love...)
- ♥ Sexual (wanting to be in a sexual relationship, finding someone hot/sexy...)
- ♥ Platonic (wanting to be friends, hanging out...)
- ♥ Sensual (wanting to be close physically, cuddling, touching, kissing in a non-sexual way...)
- ♥ Aesthetic (wanting to look at someone/thing, finding someone beautiful...)
- ♥ Alterous (wanting a bond that is beyond platonic but not romantic either, a deep emotional connection, not specified as best friend or romantic partner, alterous attraction is a vague term...)

While all these different kinds of attractions can be useful to understand the way you like people, they can also be too much. In the beginning, it was important for ace people who wanted romantic relationships to differentiate romantic and sexual attraction and the model has since developed further and further, also under the influence of aromantic people, who needed new terms of speaking about their relationships, that were neither sexual nor romantic. I think everyone can just take of this what they want and need and leave the rest for others who might need different parts of it.

Elle Tea again:

Attraction, libido, arousal

"And to further complicate sex, sexual attraction, sex-drive/libido and arousal are also different things, all stemming from different inner workings of the body. Attraction refers to a desire to be sexual with someone specific; Drive/Libido refers to a desire for sexual release, not necessarily tied to anyone or anything; and Arousal refers to a physiological response."

Thanks for that! I love how clear this difference is! I have definitely

experienced some of them and not the others and it has caused confusion,

not only to me, so I think this is a very useful thing to be able to wrap my head

around.

Now I would continue with some content out of Angela Chens book "Ace, what

asexuality reveals about desire", it is generally a great book to read, I totally

recommend. In the chapter I will be referencing she writes about the

misunderstanding that rape is not sex and about a concept of consent that is

less binary than just "yes" or "no". I will be adding my personal viewpoint and

paraphrasing some of it.

Consent: unwanted sex can be consensual, and rape is also sex

"There are different types of sexual experience and different types of consent, so a two-part framing is inadequate. In many cases, a clear line cannot be drawn between rape and sex and trying to do so does not serve us. "Rape is not sex" makes it easy for everyone to agree that this separate, scary, forced sex called rape is bad without dealing with the dynamics that drive the enormous spectrum of sexual encounters that are at least partially consensual and also violent, consensual and also damaging, consensual and also coerced."

For me, this passage describes something, that I have been unable to put words to: There are reasons that make people consent to sex, that have nothing to do with pleasure, but still don't mean that it is necessarily bad or even abusive. Most people, not only aces agree to have sex in their lives without really wanting it, for societal pressure, for relationship maintenance, for money or other economic gain. This sexual pressure is a problem, but it doesn't solve the problem to just name every sexual encounter that wasn't for the sole purpose of pleasure "rape". In situations, where the reasons for consenting are influenced by outside pressures and circumstances, the borders between yes and no can easily become vague.

TEENERS
The ACES
HERE
I FEEL YOU.

a comic by @epogsid



Consent: No means no, yes means yes, but not all yes are enthusiastic

“Because “Rape is not sex” is a false binary, so is “No means no” and “yes means yes.” These popular models of consent offer only two options: yes and no, which map onto sex and rape. An overhaul to thinking about consent will require many changes in perspective, beginning with the necessity of breaking this binary of rape and sex and thinking instead about different levels of willingness.”

The author continues with the explanation of a framework created by sex researcher Emily Nagoski, author of *Come As You Are: The Surprising New Science That Will Transform Your Sex Life*. This framework classifies 4 different kinds/degradations of consent: enthusiastic, willing, unwilling and coerced.

(Personally, I think that “unwilling” and “coerced” consent aren’t really consent in a sense that a healthy relationship can spring from them in the end.) As an example, a person having sex for the sake of their relationship and because they know it might be enjoyable if they just start and get into it would fall into the “willing” category, whereas a person only having sex because they feel bad about not giving their partner what they want and because they feel it is their “duty” in a relationship is “unwilling”, but still consensual. This situation could also become “coerced” if someone is actively manipulating the person and knows about the power imbalance in the situation. In these examples, the people can be asexual or not. Frameworks like these are useful to the ace community, seeing as enthusiastic consent is rarely possible for ace individuals, but for example sex-favorable aces are still capable of having consensual sex. The line between willing and unwilling is very fine and sometimes not easy to see from the outside, but for the person in question it makes all the difference.

This idea of consent being something that exists in different degrees made a lot of sense to me. I think it is something that has been missing from the discourse about consent that I was used to, the “yes is yes” and “no is no”, that sometimes glorifies, sometimes makes a horrible thing out of sex. My experience of consenting even though it sometimes didn’t feel good and then hearing back from friends that I was a victim or survivor didn’t feel quite right. I don’t see it that way, I consented, and it still wasn’t really wanted but I wanted to try, it was my decision. A decision I made in a situation of societal pressure and insecurity but still mine to take.

That’s it for the concepts I wanted to present, if you’re interested in more I recommend to look at the resources page in the back of the zine!

nothing at first.

say

I'm nineteen, he asks: best sex of your life? I don't

myself okay. Finding okay that:

Ok does not only mean indifference. It means: finding

But

Was that nice? Oh well. It just was ok. It just was.

should I be thinking about it? Should I want this?

Your shoulders, not thinking about it, just thinking:

Ok is indifference to begin with, means: shrugging

It was ok.

Ok.

shrugged my shoulders and just thought, again:

and how I

think about him, about last year, about his kisses

again and again and pull out my hair and

Anyway, I stand in front of the mirror again and

Or perhaps not ok?

no desire and no sex and still ageing, also ok.

First desire, then sex, eventually ageing, or

ageing, and now I know:

thought it was the other way round, first sex, then

And I stand in front of the mirror and I always

want, and, fair enough, her moment in the storyline.

from that now except new life, a child she didn't

(sex) and stays alive and I think, what does she have

She: 17 years old, way too old. And then she has it

one who doesn't want to die without having had sex.

is: the teenage girl in the alien movie, she is: the

I stand in front of the mirror and think of her. She

ageing on my face.

what is white, my fingers trace wrinkles, search for

My fingers search for ageing on my head, tear out

OK



TO TALK TO

BUT LUCKILY I HAVE THAT ONE



YOU JUST TRY TO
ACT CASUAL

SOMEbody ASKS
YOU AFTER-
WORDS HOW
YOU LIKED THE
SHOW

WHEN

IT FEELS LIKE A CONCERT

WHERE EVERYBODY IS HAVING
THEIR TIMES OF THEIR LIVES



YOUR FRIENDS
ROCKING THE FIRST
ROW

AND

YOU PAID A FORTUNE FOR
THE TICKET, FORGOT YOUR
EARPLUGS, HAVE A HEADACHE, LOST
YOUR FRIENDS AND THERE IS

THIS HUGE GUY STANDING
IN FRONT OF U

SPILLING HIS BEER ON YOUR
NEW PANTS

(YOU EVEN TRIED TO DRESS UP AS
FANCY AS POSSIBLE)

AND YOU
ARE THEM

He: much older, more drunk, less hair even than me.

We: sit on camping chairs, techno behind us, bass
within us, shame within me. Why so honest among
strangers, why the interest, why don't you

just shut the fuck up, I think.

Best day of life, best friend, best joke, best poem,
weather, flash from the past, so many things he could
have asked. I'm just laughing. Am I ok???

And at some point, finding ok that:

We're twenty-somethings, drunk, all tired yet
exuberant, and now: Spin the bottle.

And then: Never have I ever.

And someone says: everyone has everything by now! And
I think: Never have I ever

nothing

anything

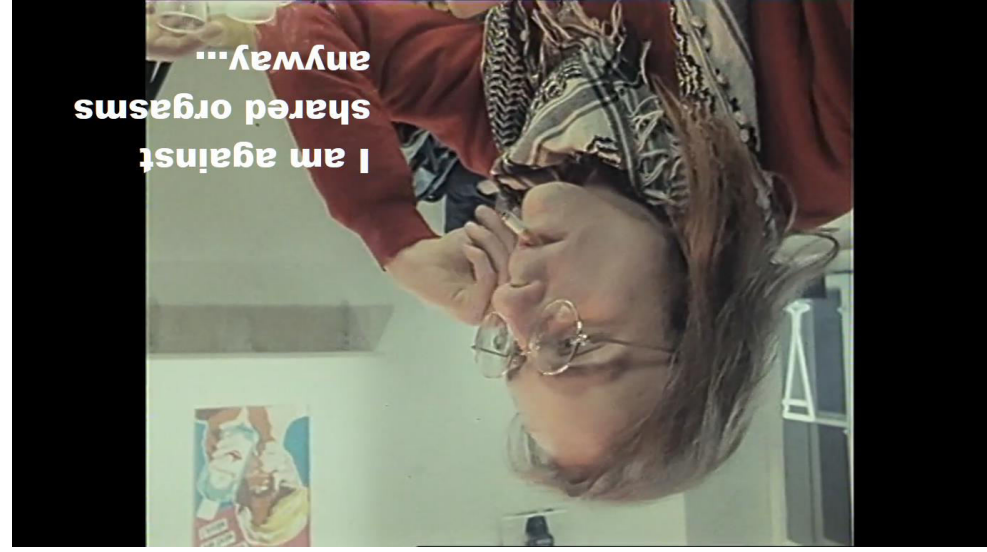
ever

with anyone. Am I ok?

I'm quiet, say nothing, next question, off to bed.

Every person to their own.

Or indeed just me to mine.





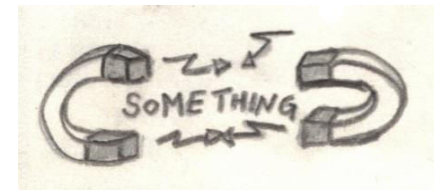
QUESTIONING ACE THOUGHTS PART 1

character strength

I think I am just not strong enough in character to not do something so “essential” as sex, when there are a bunch of reasons around me telling me to do it. With the hair on my legs and make up and stuff like that it also wasn't my own idea not to care about that (anymore), but because I had people to look up to. But because my idols either don't talk about sex or are very sex-positive, I thought it was good and important. Because people who don't talk about it just have sex privately, that's clear.

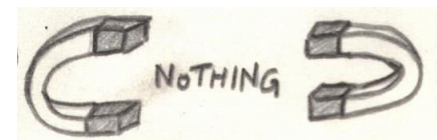
Je nique pas sinon je panique (I don't fuck, or I'll panic.)

Every time people in my surroundings were talking about non-sexualities or said something along the lines of: “Believe me, I really don't need protection against STDs, haha!”, I was intrigued. I listened up, ears wide open. But I never got any further with my reflection, never succeeded to realize my interest and to relate what I heard to myself, until I found that zine. Maybe it all just had to accumulate...



Saying No

Some time ago I already figured out that Saying NO to Sex makes me really happy. One time I told a friend whom I had been sleeping with about this, and I couldn't really explain it, but I had two ideas why it could be like that: Firstly, it is a way of feeling powerful (my friend thought that wasn't very nice) and secondly, my inner nonverbal or also my spoken No had been ignored too often. One time would have been too much already, but it was even multiple times. (for this, my friend was understanding) I still believe, that both these reasons make sense, but in the meantime I have found another good explanation: Saying No feels good, because it expresses what I feel, and that is: I don't want to have Sex.



“Teddy” – or, Why I Dumped a “Sensitive, New Age Kinda Guy”

~ by Thyacine~

The wretched phone rings again, and again... *and again!* The shrieking sound of it makes me want to dig a hole in the floor, crawl in, and hide. Instead I stash the phone in a desk in another room, and shut the door, so hopefully I won't hear it... if I take the damn thing off the hook, the fool will think I'm talking to someone else and come down to my house and find out why I'm not rushing to the phone to talk to him. I try to concentrate on typing on my outdated Macintosh, but still I can hear it ring down the hall. Every freaking ten minutes, he called, hoping I would pick up.

In my poor exhausted mind I can hear his voice and see the smirk on his fat round face, “I really, really, respect women, really; I feel so bad about all the chauvinism in the world.” Sounds okay at first, but it gets nauseating when repeated so often. And then there was the other very nice comment, “Wow, I'm really, really excited about our relationship!” Like, what relationship? Calm down, man. This is just a date. And then there was the very puking awful, “I'm just a big soft teddy bear.” And so I shall therefore refer to this paragon of modern chivalry as “Teddy,” not his real name, of course.

I came home after a long day at work, and planned to get things done with some quiet time to myself, work on my computer, do some laundry... and at six fifteen, the phone began to ring. I waited for the answering machine to pick up, but the person hung up and tried again ten minutes later. So I knew it was him. The cycle repeated itself, every ten minutes or so, until around after midnight, when he finally gave up. I wanted to pick it up and scream, “F--- you!” But I didn't.

I met Teddy at a party. He seemed okay. He asked me out. So I decided to give him a chance, to see what he was like...

Big mistake.

Thus begins the sad but true tale of the worst freaking date I have ever

been on.

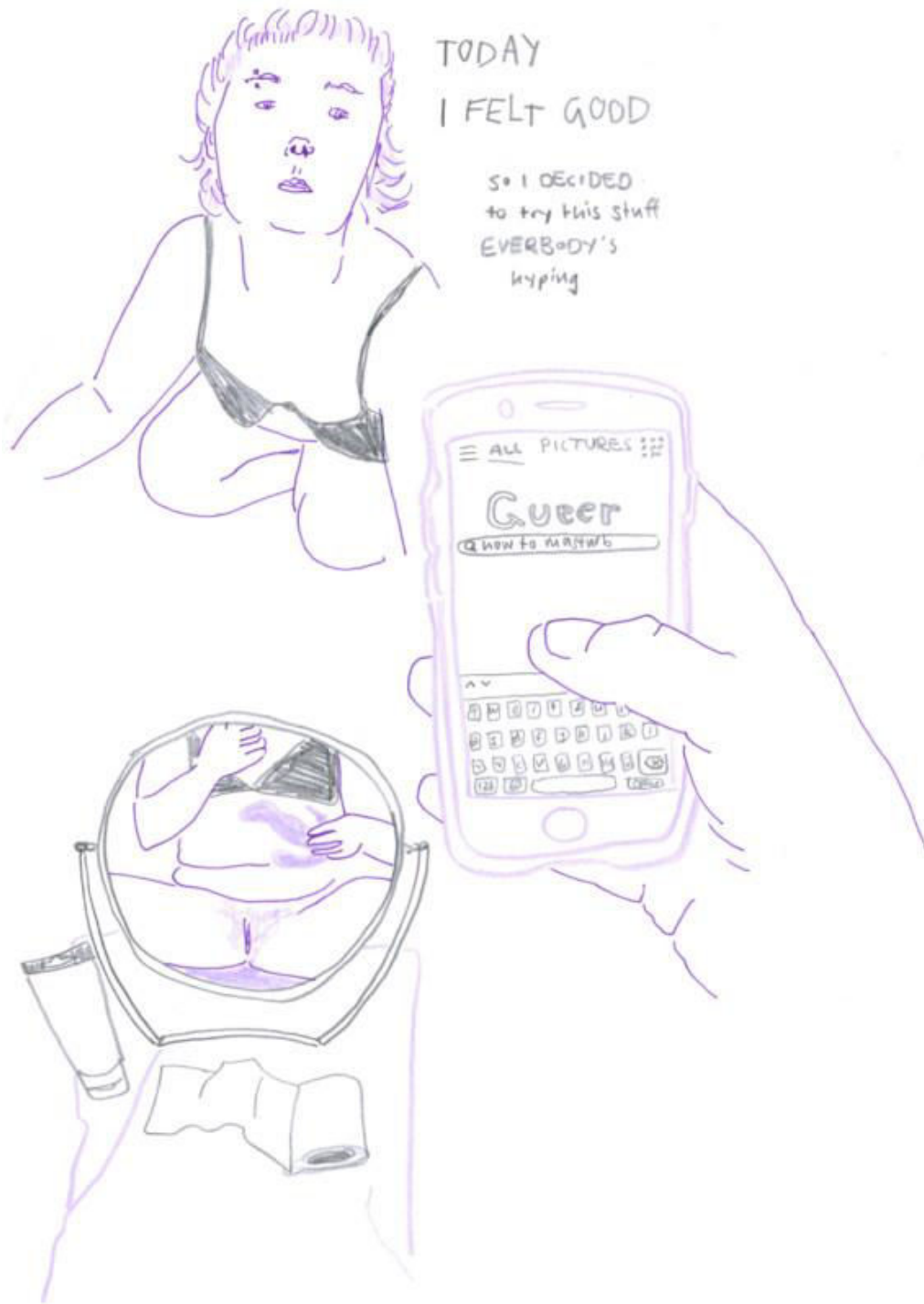
To begin with, Teddy was into religion. He declared that at one time, he was a Fundamentalist Christian. Then, suddenly, he became a “Druid,” or he called himself that, anyway. He seemed to believe in some odd mix of New Age stuff, and also said he worshipped Isis. Yeah. That's right. No kidding.

Well, maybe he just can't stick with anything?

His religion was fine with me, but he certainly liked to talk about it. In

fact, he would not shut up about it. I did not want to be judgmental, so I put that





out of my mind, let him talk, and pretended to be interested. But even with his self-proclaimed sensitivity toward women, I quickly discovered he was a real pain in the ass.

So then he asked about my religion, “Catholic?” Again, that smirk. “I know what Catholic girls are like. Always on their knees!” He smirked again, probably imagining that he was so cute, and also imagining that I ‘didn’t get it.’ He continued, “Family values, do what they’re told, can’t think for themselves, all that stuff.” Then he went on and on, that women should not be “repressed” by any religion, especially their beautiful sexuality, and how much he respects women, especially their “all-giving” nature.

He kept on and on, and insisted he was interested in me only for my “soul,” and kept insisting that I was “brilliant,” and added, “Wow! You actually know what a wiccan coven is?” The subject came up because he so enjoyed describing his paganism. Of course I knew what he was talking about. Anyone who had not been locked in a closet for the past few decades would have heard of such things. Yes, of course I have read that book, Teddy, and that one too... Yes, of course I’ve heard of Aleister Crowley... I subscribe to *Fortean Times* so how could I not know about such fascinating (yawn) things... I suppose it never occurred to poor Teddy I had any knowledge outside of simplistic office work.

“Wow! It’s amazing that you know about this stuff!”

(I shall tell readers that I have nothing against other religions, except when their members have such amazing attitudes.)

Teddy became quite depressed and moody and began to sulk when I told him, sorry, no, I could not go away with him for a “wilderness weekend.” I do like to see flowers and trees and birdies, but the thought of me, being alone... with him... was somehow disturbing.

Besides, every girl who wasn’t the village idiot knew what was meant by “going away for the weekend.” I had spent a total of a few hours with Teddy, so why did I suddenly owe him free use of my body? Besides my being asexual, the guy wasn’t exactly a movie star. And his personality wasn’t that attractive, either, I was quickly finding out. I paid for my own meal, of course, and further insist I did not owe the fool anything... !

The evening was growing old, and I needed to get up at six o’clock to get ready for this thing called work. Something apparently not important to Teddy, he smirked at that, too. I needed to go, really, really, I did. He tried to talk me into “seeing a movie.” Doesn’t this guy have a bedtime? Or is he used to staying up late so he can howl at the moon? I wanted to go home and go to bed. Alone. Teddy, on the other hand, wanted to do this and wanted to do that, see a movie, go for drinks, the list went on; he wanted to just “do more stuff.”

intelligent and infantilize me, assuming the only reason I chose my way of life was because I was too childish to want an "adult relationship."

Now that I am living independently and can focus on my friendships, family and research, I have found that I feel the most empowered when I allow myself to say no. I can say no to sex and no to sexualizing myself and I am still supporting other women's decisions. Living a liberated life means to live a life of one's choosing and not one dictated around societal norms. It is very lonely sometimes, since people continue to think my lifestyle is "pathetic" or "tragic," but I have felt so much more myself. I am enjoying exploring and redefining romance for myself. I have loved dating other asexual people and experimenting with queer platonic relationships, even though they don't fit what asexual people would consider to be romance. I like to think that living a life that isn't defined by tradition and that brings me joy is the most feminist thing I could do for myself.



I used to think that my asexuality was a sickness or personality defect. I was falling both in my role as a traditional woman that was meant to service a husband and dress according to men's taste and in the role of a feminist liberated woman who has frequent sex and is comfortable wearing revealing clothing. How could a sick, broken, woman like me have a place in society? Now that I am at peace with being asexual and understand it to be a sexuality like any other, I see how important it is that I show other people that not having sex is also a choice that every person should have and be respected for. I also hope that having the choice to say no will help people expand what love and living a fulfilling life can mean.

Probably it was a plot to get me so exhausted he would need to carry me out to my car, and then I might not "remember anything" in the morning?

He seemed hell bent on not letting me go, and acted downright manipulative, as he continued to sulk. There was no real conversation with Teddy. If we talked about hobbies, he insisted we have "so much in common!" Like what? We were at the same restaurant at the same time was all I could see. I like to travel, and was planning to go to Canada perhaps... "Great! When do we go?" He mood alternated between excited, and depressed, back and forth, for the few hours we spent together.

I apologized for the twelfth time that I really must go. "I really need to get up early, Teddy. I'm sorry." He sulked some more, and looked very sad. I insisted I knew my way to my car, but he insisted on escorting me. "Oh, but there is so much terrible violence against women!" I suppose he thought I did not know that either.

As we left the building I stepped off the curbstone and went to proceed to where my car was parked. But suddenly, I felt myself grabbed by the arm with apelike paws, yanked quickly back up onto the sidewalk, "Careful! Careful! Look out," he said, with the same tone of voice one would use when speaking with a small and simple minded child. "I don't want anything to happen to you!"

"Teddy. I'm okay."

"You sure?"

"Yes, Teddy. I'm sure."

The only car that was approaching the road we were to cross was quite far away, but he kept a tight grip, and would not let go as I tried to get to my car. "Teddy. I'll be fine." He looked both ways for me, as if I could not do this for myself. Finally, he let go, but he followed me to my car. I said goodbye. He said he would call.

And I really hoped that he would be like most men, and not call. I really hoped he would forget to call. But guess what?

The next night, he called. And called. *And called...!!!*

As it got late into the evening, an evening for which I planned to spend quietly alone, the freaky phone kept ringing, and with each ring I cringed, remembering the adorable things that he would say, "There's so much violence against women." Ring! "And it's all wrong!" Ring! "Wow! You read that book?" Ring! "I respect a woman's right to express her sexuality!" *Ring!!! Ring!!!*

I shut the door. Turned up the radio. But the phone screamed for attention all night long...

at me pityingly, calling me innocent and childish, accusing me of being a snob pushing purity culture, or simply believing I was repressed and brainwashed by the patriarchy. I constantly felt ashamed of my feelings and prayed every day that I wasn't actually asexual and would suddenly experience sexual attraction and be a "liberated, whole woman." I hoped that I would wake up a different person and no longer be broken or deemed childish. I constantly would put myself in sexual situations, thinking that if I met the right person and pushed myself out of my comfort zone, I would have my "sexual awakening." Obviously, my sexuality was not something I could change. Instead of feeling liberated, I felt like half a person. I would leave dates and parties feeling like I must be less mature, less intelligent, and somehow, not a real woman. The dates and parties just reminded me of the ways that I was defective. I felt sick all the time, dreading having to go on dates where I would have to endure unwanted sexual advances, but also fearing the rejection of other women telling me that I was hurting the feminist movement by being a prude.

When I was 21, I came out to my friends as asexual and began advocating for myself for the first time. After years of being ashamed and hating my inability to feel sexual desire, I started to believe that I might deserve to be treated with respect. I finally understood that equality and the right to choose mean supporting women who don't want sex as much as it means supporting women who do choose to have sex. To their credit, the women in the feminist organizations at my college were pretty receptive to this discussion; however, it was clear that a lot of asexual people innately felt that my choice to not have sex was unhealthy and wrong. Many even worried that my asexuality was harmful to the movement, as my push to say no to sex could be seen as promoting purity culture. It was so frustrating; being myself was seen as setting a negative example for other women!

While a lot of progress has been made, I still hear lots of crazy accusations from the people around me. People seem to think I must hate my body, or that I think less of women that engage in casual sex. When I wear my preferred clothes that cover a lot of my skin, other women ask me why I don't want to "flaunt it" and ask me why I'm anti body positivity. If I respond that I love when other people have autonomy over what they wear and that I simply like not to be sexualized or see myself as a sexual being, they often assume I must be in some strange cult or have body dysphoria. Many older adults in my life tell me I am wasting my youth and that I will regret my choice not to participate in typical sexual relationships. Many people still view me as being a very reserved, cold person despite the fact that I have a very boisterous, overly passionate personality simply because I do not express interest in sex. Some even think me less

He respects women, but not our right to go home, go to bed, alone, and get some sleep. He respects women, but not our right to not be judged on our religion. Goddess help us not to judge his religion, whatever that may be right now. Perhaps he has joined one of those mysterious sects where men are allowed 20 brides, each around age twelve. And I'm sure he respects them all and loves them for their souls.

He loves women for their minds, he says, and but was amazed to find a woman who has read a book. He told me he collected goddess statues, and worshipped Isis. And he sulked like a spoiled child when a real living woman with real world responsibilities tells him she wants to go home and sleep so she can get up to go to work in the morning.

He went on and on about women's rights, but what about my right to go to my own church without being labeled as "repressed" or "unenlightened?" Where he insists I cannot think for myself, perhaps he did not really want to know what I was thinking at that time.

The most tragic thing of the evening was that as he went on and on about women's rights, he forgot about my right to just be myself. So sorry, Teddy, that I did not go to your place to rush into bed with you that night; I guess I must have been a big disappointment. I mean, sorry I didn't suddenly get turned on and excited by listening to you yap about women's right to express their sexuality and all that. Go ahead and blame Sister Maria Theresa Immaculata for teaching me to be a good girl. It must be the Holy Roman Catholic Church's fault that he didn't get any action that night. Poor Teddy.

So after that, I gave up on dating. I said to myself, never again...!

That's it. No more.

In a way, it was a relief to say good-bye to such an outdated and foolish ritual. It's too difficult for me to sit and be polite and pretend to be interested in what someone has to say, and listen while he talks, all about himself. Or about his respect for 'women expressing their sexuality freely.'

And yah know what?

Why bother telling guys like Teddy about asexuality? I just somehow knew I would not find myself saying, "Wow! It's amazing that you've heard of that stuff!" I'm sure the concept would be above and beyond this well-read and spiritually enlightened New Age sensitive male. With guys like Teddy, you just don't pick up the phone.

And eventually, you can be sure Teddy will find another "beautiful soul" that he'll wish to bring his special enlightenment to, so that he can 'free her from sexual repression.' May they both find happiness. I'm sure he's forgotten about me...

Or at least I hope he's forgotten my phone number.

Asexuality and Feminism

Throughout my adolescence and early adulthood, I struggled to accept myself as an asexual person. While I can't claim there is the same amount of animosity towards asexual people as there is towards much of the LGBTQ+ community, I was always taught to believe that people that do not desire sex are sick and grow up to be dangerous psychopaths. Or that they are just silly children in adult bodies that haven't yet earned independence or autonomy.

I am an American woman in my mid-twenties beginning my career as a neuroscientist. I am a very focused and career-driven person. I have always had a passion for the sciences and worked very hard, despite my learning disabilities and being from a poor family. I have always been very proud of the fact that I come from a long line of feminists and powerful women and have always been an advocate for supporting other women in underrepresented fields and in pushing back against double standards and oppressive cultural practices. I try to stay involved in my community and in social movements, as I deeply value the wellbeing of my community pushing for a more just system.

However, my first experiences interacting with other young feminists in college and in early adulthood were very troubling and for a long time were a source of a lot of my self-doubt and shame. After leaving my small, poor, religiously extreme hometown for college, I was very excited to meet women from more progressive places to share my experiences and be able to vent and talk about the struggles of being a woman in the US. Being from my "backwards" town, I was initially very open to the other students educating me and helping me reject the toxic double standards I had been pushed to accept. Sexual liberation was a very new concept to me, as sex and sexuality were heavily controlled in my town, and I was very excited to learn about sex as a tool for women's empowerment. The other women told me it was feminist to challenge purity culture and embrace ourselves as sexual beings. I couldn't agree more and was so happy to support my friends in their sexual exploration.



Despite feeling very uneasy and uninterested in sex and liking to dress very formally, my friends constantly pushed me to engage in hookups and casual sex and wear more provocative clothing. At that point in my life, it had only recently dawned on me that I might be asexual, and I actively found the idea of engaging in sex myself very repugnant. I was 18 at the time and had never felt sexual attraction of any kind. Most of the women at my college would shake their heads

HAIR GREY, NOT DOING SOME/ANYTHING, GIVING UP, IS IT A DECISION?

Grey hair, 1 grey hair at least, in the mirror, and I am a fan of giving up. It is hard, in life, to decide what to do and how much of it and with whom. How to fill the days? Sometimes, I do too much, even though normally I am very capable of setting priorities and taking some quiet time for myself, but sometimes I also do too much and get strained as fuck (funny phrasing, because fuck strains me as well) and then...

...then I just have to give up. Have to give something up, leave behind and stop. And read, hammock, do nothing. Go home, because until now I've always had a place to go, or when travelling I just retreat into myself, that works too.

A short while ago I was beyond busy again and in general there was a lot of external stress facing me and so I woke up one morning, still exhausted and upon looking into the mirror there it was: a grey hair, right in the middle of my fringe. Dramatic gestures, comical comments, made-up symbols and a quiet laugh inside of me: "I am aging because of stress." And then I promised myself to keep it low for a few days, to do nothing. As Fippi Longstocking already said: "And in the end I still need to have time for just sitting here and looking around." Wise words.

But let's get back to giving up: I think it is wrongly frowned upon. Those who cannot give up aren't doing themselves any good. It can even be dangerous. (When the ambition is too high, to keep walking despite a snowstorm, instead of looking for shelter for example... (! with a sidemile at E.) And in comparison, it can be such a good feeling to give something up, that hasn't been good for you. Relationships, toxic ones. Plans, stressful ones. A course of studies, that you never really wanted, or a job...

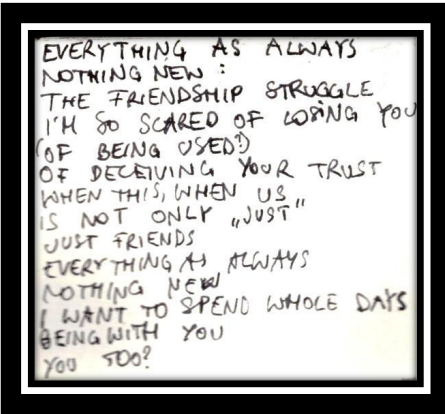
(On a sidenote: Of course, it can be rewarding to stick with something and fight for it too. But since I have the feeling that perseverance is already valued, I wanted to emphasize the opposite side for once.)

Or, for that matter, sex. Because other hobbies, that frustrate me to that extent... I would've given them up earlier. And is it a decision if you DON'T do a thing? (Yes, of course.) But, like, is it a decisive decision, an action? (Yes, of course.) Is it something you do, not-having-sex? (Yeah, sure, of course!)

QUESTIONING ACE THOUGHTS PART 2

Friendship-Jealousy

The strongest and most hurtful jealousy I ever felt was the fear of losing my friends. If someone sleeps with someone else didn't matter to me most of the time. (There was only this big insecurity of not being good enough in bed.) But not getting enough attention from close friends made me really sad and insecure. Maybe also because it already happened in school and also later that I was replaced as a person of trust, and maybe also a bit the fear that a new relationship will come along and I will become less important.



Poly

Since I heard the word relationship anarchism for the first time when I was 16 years old, I understand myself as poly or something in this direction, for sure as not monogamous. Back then, what really convinced me was the idea to not rate your relations, just like you can have multiple friendships, that are all equally important. All relationships are unique, and friendships can be just as valuable as for example romantic relationships, that's what was written

there somewhere. I would have signed that at any time. And a boyfriend was nothing I really wanted anyway. But being close to people, yes: My friends, always more. This still makes sense for me now and goes well together with being ace.

Prom-comparison

Not long ago, a comparison that might work well came to me. Sex, for me, has been like breaking into proms. Basically, I always thought that it was really fun, and everything around it is exciting, faking the tickets, dressing up, climbing fences, exchanging looks, adrenaline, the moment when you walk through the door in front of the securities... and as soon as I am in the room, I realise: Oh, actually, this is shit. I don't even like rooms packed with people, where the drinks are way too expensive and the music is almost never of my taste. I feel uncomfortable when having sex and extremely insecure, letting go is impossible most of the time, and even if I get there, I get bored quickly, I am glad when I've successfully completed the task. However, I broke into at least four different proms... And it was a similar thing with my sexual experiences, I kept trying it, kept wanting it, forgot, that it's really not for me, because the image and the activities around it were so cool and I liked those. I wanted to be a bad girl. And now I am one, a proper bad girl rejecting sex! Hahahah!



Ok, where do these brain-knots come from? Asexuality is defined as a sexual orientation, that is not a decision and not the same as celibacy. I think that's true. But when I start thinking about myself and how I approached the topic of sex and attraction, all of that gets really complicated very fast. Let's just put aside the question if I am ace or not, this might be impossible to answer even after this text. Even if asexuality is not a decision, the question if I want to have sex or not demands a decision, and the question if I want to call myself asexual (in front of myself, others, my friends, family, partners) does too. And so I get stuck in these decisions...some of them even more difficult than others.

Well, the question about sex is easy at the moment: No. (Sometimes I doubt it again, but just a tiny bit, and it should always be ok to change opinion, I have to remind myself. And I also know I am capable of enjoying sex, it's just not something that I need. And it's quite a bit of work, mental and physical. Just not worth it for me, right now.)

The question for the label: Hm...It changes faster than I can think. One moment, I am convinced to be completely ace and that this is at the root of all my problems of my past and a second later I feel like the worst impostor, because THAT, what I was feeling there, FOR SURE it was sexual attraction, so I CAN'T be ace, aaah... (or was it just my high libido or strong sensual attraction or was I aroused because of being close to someone or is it the reflex to take every opportunity for sex, that I have constructed my whole life in order to function?)

So, for coming back to the topic of the text...before I get even more grey hair, I should better give up. And I hope this will be good for myself, and I am sure of some things and that should be enough, to know some things. Like this I can already lead my life, set my boundaries and keep reflecting... because I don't want to give up on thinking about it, just on finding final solutions. That brings nothing but early aging and grey hair anyway.

Aroace and mental health problems

I have a mental illness and identify as aroace. Often, this sexual orientation has been denied by others, because it could be possible that it is just a consequence of my illness or because I take medication that could cause my libido to stagnate. My diagnosis is Borderline, or in other words, the german term directly translates as emotionally instable personality disorder. The main symptoms involve persistent mood swings, violent self-harming and the lack of long-lasting relationships. But especially the last point doesn't fit at all with me. I have friendships that have been going for 10 years and also my last relationship lasted for 2 years. Additionally, there is a concept in borderline personality disorder that is called the proximity-distance-problem. This means something like that in relationships of any kind with other people, but especially in romantic relationships, one sometimes needs a lot of closeness and contact for one or a few days and wants to spend ever free second together and then afterwards can't stand the person again for one or a few weeks and just wants peace and quiet. Of course, this makes relationships more difficult, but it doesn't make them impossible, if the other person is understanding.

How do people react to my aroace outing?

Some react understanding, if they know me well. But a lot of people tell me that this is impossible, because I was already in relationships and had sex in my life. Especially my ex-boyfriends reacted inappropriately. One of them, when I outed myself as ace, told me this as surely just a phase and it was just because I wasn't well now. The reaction of my last ex was even worse. To my outing as aroace he said, that I was just making it up and that it was probably because I had borderline. And he said I as probably just scared of commitment. But that's not it I just don't want to have this kind of relationship, ever, with anyone.

How does it feel when people tell me my sexual orientation is just my illness?

It feels shitty. I feel like people don't take me seriously at all. I always have to listen to the same sentences: "I am sure it is just your illness.", "It is the medication." But like I said before, it's not that. I just don't want a relationship, it just exhausts me. Yes, I do have crushes on people, but nothing further. I don't fall in love, and if I develop some kinds of feelings, it is more out of sense of duty, because I don't want to hurt the other person. Now I know, that this isn't a solution, because it just tires me and doesn't help the other person either. And in the end, I have to listen to them telling me I am fake and was just lying to them all the time.

What is my gain in identifying as aroace?

Mainly I do it so I can put a label on the chaos in my head. I just learnt about the term aroace recently, but it was like an epiphany, finally I had a word that describes what goes on inside me.

Why do I identify as aroace even though that means I have to explain myself more?

To name what is going on. Of course, it is frustrating to have to explain what I mean every time, but it helps me to feel like a part of something. But when I am not in the mood to explain, I just say sentences like: "I don't have sex." Or "I don't want or have a relationship." That makes it easier.

Do you believe that being aroace has a connection with your mental illness?

I have thought about this a lot, actually. Also, because, as a mentally ill woman, I am often reduced to that, so people don't have to deal with the fact that I have to say about my (non-existent) romance and sex-life might be valid anyway. I cannot give a completely clear opinion on it though. I always thought of sex more as of a duty than as something I wished for. It is likely, that this has been reinforced by traumatizing experiences, such as being raped at age 16 or several other sexual harassments. But this has nothing to do with my illness per se. Although you have to say, that if I had been stable psychologically, I wouldn't have behaved as careless. But if you don't plan on living long, then the before stops mattering too. You also have to take into account, that for a lot of people, when they are depressed, or suffer from something similar, their libido goes down. So, in the end, I cannot say for sure. My personal feeling tells me that my being aroace has not so much to do with my mental illness. But I can't be certain about it, especially because my psychological crisis was very consuming when I was in puberty, and I think this is an important time in life for finding your sexual and romantic self.

Finally, I want to say: I am sure it doesn't make it easier to be mentally ill and aroace, but I also don't want to say that being "just" aroace can't also be a weight to carry. In my life, I wish I'd had met more understanding and sympathy, especially at break-ups, but I can still advise everyone to talk about this topic with partners from the beginning of a relationship, if it is relevant and you feel sure enough of yourself. Because if the other person reacts in an ignorant or denying way and it isn't possible to explain it to them, they aren't worth it.

