

How can I provide asexual informed advocacy?

- Respect their identity and treat it as valid, regardless of the reasons someone may identify as ace. Do not question it or attempt to determine their orientation for them.
- Educate yourself about asexual issues. Resources can be found on the back of this brochure.
- Avoid reinforcing compulsory sexuality. Sex is **not** a necessary component of a healthy and happy life.
- Make sure that the resources you're referring an ace person to are ace-friendly.
- If a client is feeling distress about being asexual, let them know that it's okay to be asexual. Do not attempt to change their orientation.
- Understand that aces may have issues accessing LGBTQIA related resources because those communities are not always welcoming to asexual people.
- Do not conflate sex and intimacy when counseling an asexual person. People can have intimacy without sex.

For more resources,
check out these websites:

Resources for Ace Survivors
<http://asexualsurvivors.org/>

The Carnival of Aces
<https://asexualagenda.wordpress.com/a-carnival-of-aces-masterpost/>

Ace Talk: Asexuality Uncovered
www.matthewsplace.com/asexuality

The Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN)
www.asexuality.org

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Advocating For Asexual Survivors of Sexual Violence

What is an asexual person?

An asexual person is someone who does not experience sexual attraction. Colloquially referred to as “aces,” this group makes up approximately one percent of the population. Just like with other sexual orientations, no definite cause has been pinpointed. Being asexual is not something you can choose; it’s something you simply are. Asexuality exists on a spectrum the way that other sexualities do. Many aces identify somewhere in the gray area, which is referred to as the ace spectrum. Gray-asexuals may feel sexual attraction under very rare and specific circumstances, or they may feel sexual attraction but never have a desire to act on it. Another subset of gray-asexuality is demisexuality, which occurs when a person only feels sexual attraction after forming a very strong, emotional bond.

Asexuality is not...

- celibacy or abstinence (though many aces are celibate)
- not knowing the “right person” yet
- a disorder or sexual dysfunction
- a hormone imbalance
- an aversion to sex or relationships (though many aces do feel this aversion)
- a result of trauma (though even if it was, it would still be 100% valid)
- voluntary or a phase

Asexual people...

- May be completely unable to access an ace-competent doctor/therapist. The DSM-IV characterized asexuality as Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder, or as a characteristic of another mental disorder. Many professionals insist on treating the asexual client’s orientation and refuse to recognize asexuality as a sexual orientation. The DSM-V (released in 2013) does not characterize asexuality as a mental disorder, but many professionals still operate under the old guidelines.
- May or may not experience romantic attraction. Many aces still engage in relationships. Often they have romantic orientations with prefixes on them that indicate the gender(s) of people they’re romantically attracted to (i.e.: homoromantic, heteroromantic). A person who does not experience romantic attraction is aromantic.
- May have issues talking about sex or having their bodies touched. Many asexuals are touch-averse and sex-averse.
- May receive a lot of negative comments or reactions when they tell someone they’re asexual. Many people don’t understand it or have negative preconceptions of it. In 2012 researchers at Brock University conducted a study on sexual orientation and prejudice. Of all the groups they studied, asexual people were the most dehumanized.

Asexual survivors...

- May have issues talking with hospital staff, police, or other advocates because of discrimination or lack of understanding they may face.
- May have issues with books/other resources that advocates use to help clients heal from sexual trauma. Many sexual assault recovery materials were constructed with the idea that non-sexual people are broken and need to recover sexually to be healthy. These materials are very damaging to ace survivors.
- May have experienced corrective rape- a type of sexual assault aimed at changing someone’s sexual orientation.
- May have been told by others that the assault caused their asexuality, which is not only a problematic thing to say but very unlikely according to the latest research on asexuality.
- May feel like they need to change their sexual orientation to heal from sexual abuse, or feel broken because they are asexual. These feelings come from compulsory sexuality- the societal idea that everyone should have sex or want to have sex.