Dear Alice,

I need advice. I think that my roommate is a lesbian. Help!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Answer

Dear Reader,

It sounds like you’re distressed or concerned about your roommate’s sexuality. Maybe some general information about sexuality and sexual orientation would be useful. Or, maybe you are looking for a way to talk to your roommate because you are concerned or worried or something? Either way, you might try looking at the situation as an opportunity to learn about someone different from you. This is one of the best things about living with new roommates?the opportunity to learn and grow.

First, a quick primer on sexuality and sexual orientation: Popular culture tends to teach us that a person is either straight or gay; however, many sexuality experts actually believe that humans fall on a continuum of sexual orientations. The Kinsey Scale is one version of this continuum, on which exclusively heterosexual (attracted to the opposite sex) people are a ?0? on the scale, while exclusively homosexual (attracted to the same sex) people are a ?6?. In reality, many people fall between these two extremes, being attracted predominantly to one sex, but sometimes attracted to the other, or being equally attracted to both sexes. Your roommate may fall anywhere along the spectrum?maybe she is primarily attracted to women, maybe only sometimes, or maybe not at all. The truth is that sexuality is only one aspect of a person.

It may be helpful to think about your own reaction to the idea that your roommate is a lesbian before speaking with her. What does it mean for you if your roommate is attracted to women or identifies herself as a lesbian? Does it affect your living situation or your relationship with her? Are you uncomfortable with homosexuality, or concerned about how others will react if they know you are living with a lesbian? Do you worry that others will think you are a lesbian too? To get more information about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) issues and help clarify your feelings and concerns, you could check out the related questions below and from the Go Ask Alice! LGBTQ archives [2]. You may also find it helpful information from Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) [3].

By dealing with your own reaction, you can learn about yourself and expand your world. Remember that your roommate is the same person as she was before you had the idea that
she may be a lesbian. If she had likable traits before, then she will continue to have these likable traits. If she was unpleasant before, she will probably continue to be unpleasant. Being a lesbian does not change your roommate at all, besides giving her another dimension in your eyes.

Once you've thoroughly considered your own feelings you may still want to talk to your roommate. What would you like to say to her? Perhaps it would help to write your thoughts and questions in a letter that you don't send, to clarify your feelings. You could also talk with her about some of your thoughts - not asking her to justify or explain herself, but simply expressing your observations, your concerns, and your eagerness to learn. Then let her respond. She may or may not answer your questions about her sexuality directly; this is her choice. She may need your support and friendship, and could be afraid of losing it because you are uncomfortable with her orientation. By keeping an open mind about her supposed sexual orientation, you can maintain a congenial living situation, and maybe even strengthen your friendship.

Here's to appreciating people for who they are!

Alice!
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