Not all gay men have anal sex [1]

Dear Alice,

I just found your site after reading an article in the May issue of Men's Health. I read many of your previous Q&As, especially those regarding homosexuality.

I am gay and found your answers to be very appropriate and right on the money. Perhaps when you respond to further questions about homosexuality, you could mention this:

All gays do not engage in anal sex. I know many men who prefer not to engage in this sex act. I don't think enjoying anal sex is synonymous with homosexuality. This might comfort some of the straight men who write you and say they enjoy anal stimulation. I believe being gay is about having emotional relationships with men and not necessarily about the type of sex acts one engages in. I also want to make it clear to those young men who are just coming out. I think they feel pressured to engage in anal sex, especially if they view pornography. Porno stars show this to be mandatory for a male-to-male relationship. Quite frankly, it's not necessarily a very pleasurable experience for novices.

? My two cents

Answer

Dear My two cents,

Thanks for your confidence in Go Ask Alice! and for helping maintain its accuracy.

Your perspectives on anal sex and sexual orientation are right on target. Anal sex is not a prerequisite for being a gay man. Conversely, being a gay man is not a mandate for enjoying anal sex. Many gay men do not have anal sex. In fact, oral sex and mutual masturbation are more common than anal stimulation among gay men in long-term relationships. And while many people stereotypically view anal stimulation as a homosexual male act, anal sex is a sexual behavior, not tied to a group of people whether they describe themselves as homo-, bi-, or heterosexual. Physical, emotional, social, and sexual attractions, not behaviors, are key factors in a person's understanding of his or her sexual orientation.

People of all sexual orientations fantasize about and/or try anal sex. Some find they like it while others dislike it. Some people use anal stimulation while masturbating or during sexual play (see the Related Q&As listed after this answer for examples). Studies indicate that about 25 percent of heterosexual couples have had anal sex at least once, and 10 percent regularly have anal penetration.
Many people fantasize about anal sex and other taboo sexual acts. This is easily seen through the content of pornographic films. Much of the pornography available, marketed toward people of any sexual orientation, provides extreme and stylized examples of fantasies. As a result, it's easy to assume that these images are the "right" way to have sex. Anal sex is portrayed as quite normal in porn imagery, but, in reality, it occurs much less frequently than other sexual behaviors. Many will find that the fantasy of anal sex is pleasurable, while the reality may not be.

The last point you make is important, as well. Some sexual acts are uncomfortable for beginners. Sexual behaviors are learned; they can take time, trial and error, communication, and practice till they result in pleasure.

Careful readers such as you help Go Ask Alice! maintain its accuracy as it provides information, perspective, and resources on healthy sexuality. Thank you again for taking the time to clarify these points.

Alice!
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