Dear Alice,

I'm a fourteen-year-old male. Recently, I've been extremely attracted to those of the same sex. I enjoy masturbating while fantasizing about other teenagers of my own age. I want to know if I am gay, or if it is just a phase.

Bewildered

Answer

Dear Bewildered,

Many people experience similar feelings of excitement as well as confusion when they notice and acknowledge a same-sex attraction (see the Related Q&As below). Different people experience and deal with these feelings in different ways. Acknowledging your feelings, and then building on these feelings to increase pleasure when you masturbate, is certainly healthier than denying they exist and depriving yourself of the beauty of human desire and attraction. When we bury our feelings because we are afraid of what they mean, they usually return to the surface in the future in a larger way.

This doesn't mean that you have to share your private thoughts with others, nor do your feelings today predict whom you will be or what you will feel tomorrow. Fantasies provide a way for us to explore feelings and desires, safely, in the privacy of our imagination, without acting on them. If you enjoy the pleasure that these fantasies provide, you don't necessarily need to have sex with another man. You have choices. In the meantime, your experience through fantasy can help you learn about yourself, and perhaps even be more comfortable with yourself and with the sexual decisions you make, regardless of your partner's gender.

If you would like to talk with someone about what you're feeling, you can contact the Gay and Lesbian National Help Center, an organization that provides free and confidential peer support for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning people.

Alice!

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