Dear Alice,

I've sorta been curious lately about what it feels like to do the big M using my fingers. I'm uncomfortable doing it though. I can't even use a tampon let alone do THAT with my fingers and I don't have anything that vibrates. What other options do I have?

- Curious but nervous

Answer

Dear Curious but nervous,

If it's masturbation options you are after, you?re in luck! The options are as diverse as you could imagine. You mention your inability to use a tampon: penetration is only one of many ways to experience sexual pleasure. Masturbation can, but does not have to be, a purely genital-focused experience or one that is focused on penetration. So what are the options? How about exploring what sexual pleasure means for you? The terrific online resource, Scarleteen [2], suggests that any form of interacting with yourself in a sexual way can be considered masturbation. Masturbation could also be touching other parts of your body sexually, or it could be having sexual fantasies, or reading erotica or romantic literature. You could explore the sensations from rubbing your body against the edge of a chair, a pillow, a humming washing machine, or a smooth or rounded object like a cucumber or the head of a spoon.

But it sounds like there are a couple aspects to your question, and it may be also worth addressing the two feelings you mention: feeling curious and feeling uncomfortable. Curiosity about what masturbation could or will feel like with your fingers (or any other objects) is incredibly common. Sexual desire and the pursuit of sexual pleasure are ? pretty universally ? exciting and curiosity-provoking, as well as possibly anxiety-producing or nerve-wracking. In many cultures, there may be messages that sexual self-exploration is something to be embarrassed about, or that sex should only be performed with a partner under particular parameters (e.g. only after marriage). In practice, sexual behaviors take place over a great range of time and in a huge diversity of ways. Learning about what is pleasurable to you may become an important part of your self-confidence, as well as building self-acceptance and future sexual pleasure. Your acknowledgment of your own curiosity as well as your ability to own up to your initial discomfort may go a long way ? ultimately helping you move toward a fulfilling, educational, and rewarding experience.
If you do decide to masturbate by interacting with your genitals, you may want to start by simply spending time exploring your own anatomy. Seeing how those different body parts respond to your own touch may increase your enjoyment as those areas are stimulated. Check out Female masturbation optimization [3], which may be a source of inspiration to you as you embark on your great journey of masturbation and self-satisfaction.

One cool thing to consider is that with masturbation, you get to play the role of pleasure giver and pleasure receiver. This means you can start whenever you feel comfortable. Or stop whenever you feel uncomfortable or want to take a break. Also, try to patient with yourself. Forcing yourself to feel a certain way can put a lot of pressure on you and make the experience less enjoyable. Be sure to go as slow (or as fast) as you are comfortable with, and if you tried something that you didn’t like so much, don’t sweat it. You can try something else next time.

If your curiosity continues and you want some other ideas about how you may invest in your self-pleasuring experiences, consider checking out the Go Ask Alice! masturbation archives [4] for more information. If you don’t own a vibrator or dildo and want to buy one, consider checking out Babeland [5] or Good Vibrations [6].

Alice!
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