Will I ever find a gay partner? [1]

Dear Alice,

I've been gay all of my life, and until just now, I've learned to accept it. I've told all my friends that I am gay. Some of them didn't like that, and now they're not my friends. None of my other friends are gay, which was a disappointment because I had a crush on one of them. Now I don't know what to do because not only do I not know who else is gay, but I don't have the courage to ask someone out. I'm afraid that if I can't ask someone out by the time I'm out of college, I'll never be able to have a relationship. I don't want to have to resort to online dating either. I want to know how I can overcome my fear.

? Gay and proud

Answer

Dear Gay and proud,

Give yourself a big round of applause for accomplishing a key first step on the road to Gay Date-Land: coming out. It can be scary and hard to come out, especially when not everyone responds with enthusiasm. It sounds like you've mastered this step and sorted your true allies from those who are less supportive. You also write that you've "learned to accept" your sexuality; as you’re looking to meet potential partners, what about developing some enthusiasm about it? This could actually be useful to dating and something that you might consider revisiting. Your sexuality is a natural and healthy part of who you are, and as your signature suggests, something that can bring you happiness and pride. It is up to you to define your own sexuality and relationships. And speaking of relationships, perhaps a next step could be seeking out and making connections with others who identify in a similar way.

Figuring out who else is gay is not just a precursor to asking someone out, but can really be a boost for you outside of the romantic realm ? being the only out gay person in your social group can be lonely. And, having other folks with whom you can share experiences could help you overcome your fears about relationships. Others could give you dating tips, creative pick-up lines, or commiserate about crushes. Beyond the obvious rainbow flag-wavers, finding other gay folks may be a challenge for some because homophobia can keep some from coming out. Is there a gay-straight alliance or LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning) group at your school? A queer activist or social group in your community? Maybe you could meet other LGBTQ people that way. You also mention that you're unimpressed with the online dating options, but maybe you could find information
online about organizations or events in your area where you might be able to make friends. A lot of people on the internet are like you; they're having a hard time finding other people who identify in similar way and are looking for meaningful relationships (friendly or romantic). If you live in an area without an established LGBTQ community, connections you make on the internet might especially help you feel less isolated. Check out Looking for love online [2] for information about online dating.

And now, the big leap: asking someone out. The same skills apply, no matter your identity: communication, confidence, and resilience. Once you've identified a possible date-ee, you can prepare to ask that person out. This can be divided into two parts: (1) inviting someone to spend time with you so you can learn more about each other, and (2) expressing your romantic interest in them. The first part could be practiced with friends. "Hey, wanna go see a movie on Friday?" "Have you been to the new coffee shop? Maybe we could check it out after school." For more pointers on how to ask someone out, check out the related Q&As.

If you're comfortable making plans with your friends, you could think of dating as the same sort of process. It might feel less intimidating if you think of it as a chance to get to know each other as friends, rather than a formal date. It's totally okay to start small! If you seem to both enjoy spending time together, you could move to part two, where you express your romantic interest. Getting to know the person will hopefully give you a sense of whether they share your interest. Then, when you say something like "I really enjoy spending time with you. Would you want to be my boyfriend/girlfriend/partner?" it won't feel like such a huge leap.

All in all, asking someone out can make just about anyone feel vulnerable, so it's good to take small steps, keep a positive attitude, and try to relax. You're already ahead of the curve in having come out so young. As you get older, your pool of potential partners will probably grow, as more of your peers develop the courage to come out as well. If you practice initiating friendly activities and friendships, and spend time getting to know people, hopefully someone will stand out from the crowd and your relationship will develop comfortably into something more.

Alice!
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