In love with my best friend, but he's gay

Dear Alice,

My best buddy is a gay male. I am a straight female. We get along so well, soul mates, so to speak. My problem is that I truly believe I am in love with him. I miss him terribly when we are apart and am very turned on by him. I can't explain it. Do I keep on as is because I can't risk losing him or do I try to see if he has bisexual interests?

Answer

You offer yourself two seemingly opposed options in your question: to leave things as they are and keep him as a friend, or to investigate whether he may be interested in women and, perhaps, gain a lover. Those choices aren't as clear-cut as you make out. There's no guarantee in life — you could never mention your attraction and your friendship could still end some day, or you could talk about your desire for something more from your friend and still maintain your friendship if that doesn't work out.

While you could preserve your relationship as it exists now by just ignoring your attraction toward him, not addressing your feelings could, over time, create a tension in your friendship. Healthy, strong relationships are built on trust and communication, even communicating about and through sometimes difficult topics. If you can honestly give up your attraction and be happy with the strong platonic friendship you already have with your soul mate, then you could decide to keep your feelings to yourself. If they won't go away or they may lead to unhappiness, however, then you owe it to yourself and to your friendship to be open and honest about them. That frank communication, though, has to happen with the understanding that the feelings may very well not be reciprocated, and that there may be a period of awkwardness in your relationship as your friend deals with this information himself.

Maybe you want to bring up bisexuality in a conversation and see what your friend's thoughts are. Perhaps you'll learn something about him you don't yet know. On the other hand, be prepared to find him asking what your sudden interest in his sexual feelings towards women is all about. He might, in fact, already have suspected that you're attracted to him, as those emotions are sometimes difficult to hide.

It might make sense to ask yourself some questions, and see how you would answer them in your imagination as him. How might he take the information that you are attracted to him and want more than just a friendship? What is more important to you at this point? Having your friend remain your friend may be more important than possibly changing that relationship into
a romantic one. Or, you may decide that you two could reasonably stay friends if something romantic didn't work out.

Life decisions, and smaller ones, too, involve risk, and it's up to you to choose how much risk is worth taking. There are a myriad of possibilities, but you need to make your own decision based on your priorities. It doesn't matter what decision you make, as long as you feel confident that you've thought it out and made one that feels right to you. Sometimes the outcome won't be what you planned, but that's the risk that forms an exciting, and sometimes challenging, aspect to our lives.

Alice!

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