Loving confusion? Is it okay to love same sex friends... and say so? [1]

Alice,

What is the difference between "I like you" and "I love you"?

I mean, when I say, "I like you," to my male friends, and when I said, "I love you," to my girlfriend and my family. In my opinion, I'm not supposed to say, "I love you," to my best male friend because of homosexuality. Is it true?

Mr. Doubtful

Answer

Dear Mr. Doubtful,

If you posed your first question about 'like' and 'love' to a hundred different people, you'd probably get about a hundred different responses. Why? Because there is no one answer, no right or wrong interpretation of what it means to express like and love. Sure, most people may say that love is a stronger feeling and emotion than like, but the clarity may end there. If you think about it, aren't we lucky that we have levels to choose from when it comes to expressing the way we feel about others?

So, why would you like someone, and want to say so?

- Because s/he is fun to be around
- Because s/he is great to talk with about what's on your mind; s/he listens and gives good advice
- Because s/he is warm, friendly, and nice to other people
- Because the two of you have a lot in common
- Because s/he respects your privacy
- Because s/he makes you feel good about yourself
- Because s/he has taken the time to get to know you and involve you in his or her life
- And an infinite number of other reasons

Now, why would you love someone, and want to say it?

- Because s/he is fun to be around
- Because s/he is great to talk with about what's on your mind; s/he listens and gives good
advice
• Because s/he is warm, friendly, and nice to other people
• Because the two of you have a lot in common
• Because s/he respects your privacy
• Because s/he makes you feel good about yourself
• Because s/he has taken the time to get to know you and involve you in his or her life
• And an infinite number of other reasons

Moving on to your question about homosexuality, notice that these lists don't include anything about having a crush on, wanting to have sex with, or wanting to spend the rest of your life with the object of your like, or love. That's because 'like' and 'love' don't require these feelings. You mentioned that it's okay to feel and voice love for your family, no doubt for some of the reasons offered above and not just because you're supposed to love them (including same-sex family members). Is it possible your friends can fall into this same category? especially the ones who are there for you just like family?

A guy telling a guy friend "I love you" does not mean that he's gay any more than not telling someone of the same sex that you love him means you're heterosexual. Perhaps the most important questions to ask are, what are your true feelings? And there is the question that may be at the root of your letter: how will your friend respond? Will he smile, laugh, say the same back, hug you, get it, freak out, call you a name, stop being your friend, or learn something? You can't control his reaction, but you may learn a lot about him from his reaction. If you want to tell your friend you love him and think that expressing your feelings might be uncomfortable for either of you, consider talking in distraction-free zones, in private, and when you're both feeling relaxed.

Think of all the time we'd save, and anxiety we'd prevent, if we didn't have to worry about the prejudice factor and how it might taint these and other incredible compliments and expressions of caring.

Like you a lot,

Alice!

Category:
Relationships [2]
Relationship Stuff [3]
Friendship [4]
Relating & Communicating [6]

Related questions

Practice sex with best friend [8]
Sleeping boyfriend talks about sex with other men [7]
What can I buy my good male friend? [8]
Told him my true feelings and now it's truly awkward [9]

Published date:
Jun 29, 2001
Last reviewed on:
Feb 12, 2015