Dear Alice,

I'm a twenty-three-year-old grad student. I am now, and have always been, sexually attracted only to Asian women. I've had many sexual experiences with many different women from all corners of the globe, but this preference has become fanatical. Why?

? Obsessed

Answer

Dear Obsessed,

Despite the number of websites that claim to know the secrets of sexual attraction, there is little definitive research that can explain why people are attracted to certain physical characteristics over others. The matter becomes more complicated when you consider the fact that any person's definition of sexual attractiveness may be influenced by emotional, cultural, and individual factors. And, if you add in the meaning you associate with someone's appearance (that is, generalizations you may make based on physical characteristics) such as race, age, height, weight, and so on, you begin to see a truly complicated picture of what goes into sexual attraction.

For starters, to better understand what is behind your attraction, you might consider asking yourself a few questions. There are many countries that make up Asia ? is your preference for women of any specific Asian ethnicity? Given the diversity both between and within Asian countries, have you noticed any difference in your experiences with individual Asian women? Do you think most Asian women fit a certain mold or set of characteristics? These questions can help you examine generalizations you might have about Asian women. With stereotypes ? of Asian women, Asian men, and almost every other group you can think of ? some people fit them, but more do not. If you do have images of how Asian women are; how have your experiences fit these stereotypes? Have you been disappointed? Is the idea of how Asian women are "supposed to be" what turns you on? Or, is it the individual woman you are with who is attractive to you?

Back to your question on why your preference for Asian women has become fanatical: What does "fanatical" mean to you? Do you mean you prefer to date Asian women? Does it mean that you stay home from school or work obsessing and fantasizing about Asian women? If "fanatical" means you simply have a strong attraction to women with certain characteristics, this would fall well within the range of normal ? many people have a physical "type" who they
find attractive. Again, it can be useful to examine what about this "type" is attractive to you, but having a type doesn't necessarily indicate any problem. If you are concerned that your attraction to Asian women has begun to interfere with other life activities such as work or school, or if you feel your strong preference may be limiting who you meet and interact with, you may consider talking with someone about your feelings. A close friend may be a good starting point; a counselor may also help you clarify your feelings.

There is no conclusive research on why some people are attracted to blacks (or to whites), to redheads (or to blondes), to short people (or to tall people), to heavy people (or to slender people), to breasts (or to buttocks), etc. Since attraction is such a variable phenomenon, it may be most useful look at your personal values and generalizations, and to work with each relationship or sexual encounter as a new and different one ? with each woman as an individual person. When you do find yourself in the company of any woman, enjoy and appreciate her uniqueness, in addition to her physical qualities you find attractive.

Alice!

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