



Ace Inclusion

qmul.ac.uk

Asexuality/ace is an umbrella term and exists on a spectrum.

At Queen Mary, we use 'ace' as an umbrella term for anyone identifying under the asexual or aromantic umbrellas. Different asexual people experience their ace identities differently.

People experience lots of different kinds of attraction. When it comes to relationships, the main kinds of attraction we tend to talk about are sexual and romantic attraction. Most people experience both at the same time – feeling romantically attracted to someone usually means also being sexually attracted to that person.

For those who identify as ace, and for some people who identify as heterosexual, bi, gay and lesbian, sexual and romantic attachment is not always matched.

Asexual people may not experience sexual attraction but may still experience romantic attraction. Likewise, aromantic people may not experience romantic attraction, but may experience sexual attraction. It's also possible to be both asexual and aromantic.

Other identities that fall under the ace umbrella

For many, being able to label their identities is extremely important as it allows them to raise awareness of and highlight experiences that would otherwise be ignored. This may also help individuals to find communities that they can identify with. If someone finds a label that fits their experiences, which they may not have previously been able to express, it can lessen feelings of otherness and isolation.

Note that the below list is by no means an exhaustive list.

- **Asexual** - Someone who is asexual does not experience sexual attraction to anyone.
- **Aromantic** - Someone who does not experience romantic attraction.
- **A grey-asexual (grey ace/grey-a)** - Someone who may experience sexual attraction very rarely or only under specific circumstances.
- **Grey-romantic** - Someone who only experiences romantic attraction very rarely.
- **Demisexual** – Someone who only experiences sexual attraction after developing a strong emotional bond with someone.
- **Demiromantic** - Someone who is only romantically attracted to those they have emotionally bonded with first.

Asexuality is a legitimate, lived identity, but is commonly misunderstood. The lack of understanding about asexual identities can have negative effects on ace people and often results in experiences of bullying, harassment, ace-erasure and acephobia.

Ace-erasure and Acephobia

Acephobia is a term used to describe the fear or dislike of someone, based on prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or views about people who are or are perceived to be ace.

Ace-erasure: the denial that asexuality and/or aromanticism is real, and the invisibility and lack of representation of asexuality and aromanticism. Examples include dismissing, ignoring, or trying to explain away asexuality/aromanticism.

What might acephobia and ace-erasure look like?

- Suggesting that ace people are against human nature - this denies and undermines asexuality as a valid sexual orientation and can be extremely upsetting to the ace community.
- Suggesting that there is something 'wrong' with someone who identifies as ace - 'You are deficient or broken'.
- 'You are confused or going through a phase' – saying this dismisses and undermines someone's experiences and/or feelings about their own sexuality and identity, which can be upsetting.
- Saying that 'you just haven't met the right person yet' - denies that asexuality is not a sexual orientation and that you need to be in a relationship with another person to understand your sexual orientation and be accepted.
- Saying that asexuality is a mental illness or is related to past trauma.

How to be a great ace ally

Follow Stonewall's tips on how to be a great ace ally.

- **If someone comes out to you as ace, believe them.** Ace identities are legitimate and real.
- **Read up on ace identities or listen to podcasts**– you're already on this leaflet, so that's a great start!
- **Don't assume everyone needs sex or romance to be happy** – let them choose their own path. Accept their relationship choices and support them as you would anyone else.
- **Remember that ace people may have an additional identity.** An asexual person who is romantically attracted to people of the same gender may refer to themselves as gay. An aromantic person who is sexually attracted to all genders may identify as pan.
- **Don't ask intrusive questions about someone's sex life.** It's not OK to do this to anyone, ace people included.
- Be an active bystander - **call out ace-erasure and acephobia** where you see it and educate others along the way.

Internal Support

- [Advice and Counselling](#) - Advice and Counselling provide a range of specialist, professional and confidential services to support **students** with financial, welfare, legal, emotional and psychological issues.
- [Togetherall](#) - Queen Mary University of London offers all its **staff and students** access to an online support service called 'Togetherall'. Togetherall offers unlimited, 24/7 accessible online support – you can connect with peers, chat online to clinicians, use self-help resources, join groups or take self-assessments. To [join Togetherall follow this link](#) and sign up using your Queen Mary University of London with your university e-mail address.
- [Employee Assistance Programme](#) - The employee assistance programme is a free, confidential service that provides a wide range of support for **staff** around help balancing work, family and personal life. Available anytime, any day, by phone, email or online, the service provides information, resources, referrals and counseling on any issue that matters to you.
- [Report + Support platform](#) - We want Queen Mary to be the most inclusive university of its kind. If you or someone else have experienced harassment, hate incidents, bullying or gender-based violence, you can report it via our secure [Report + Support platform](#). Report + Support provides information about specialist external services and offers the option to make a report to the University to discuss options for support and possible action.

External Resources

- [GALOP](#) - provide further reading and resources around asexuality and ace identities
- [The Asexual Visibility & Education Network](#) - provide further reading and resources around asexuality and ace identities.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Human Resources
Tel: +44 (0)20 7882 3697
Email: hr-equality@qmul.ac.uk

qmul.ac.uk
