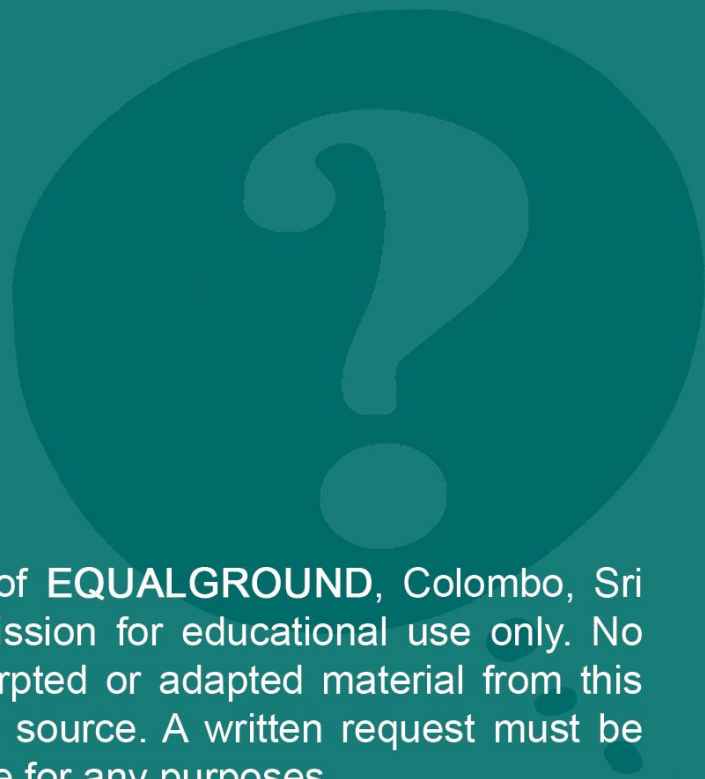




**EQU  L GROUND**

# I MIGHT BE BISEXUAL

An information booklet for young people



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# What does it mean to be bisexual?



A Bisexual person is a person who is physically, emotionally and/or spiritually attracted to both men and women. Bisexual people have the capacity to love people of either gender. This can include physical, sexual and emotional attraction to and/or forming relationships with, men and women. Throughout one's lifetime, a bisexual person might feel equally attracted to men and women or to one gender in preference to the other.

The strengths of these attractions may change over time, just like heterosexual and homosexual attractions. Being bisexual does not define either one's lifestyle or sexual behavior. Bisexual people may be monogamous or abstinent or may have multiple sexual partners, just like heterosexuals and homosexuals.

Many people are bisexual and bisexuality cuts across differences of race/ethnicity, gender, age, class, ability, and religious affiliation. You are not alone, and you are likely to meet bisexual people just about anywhere you go, although in Sri Lanka, they may not be that easy to identify.



# How do I know if I'm bisexual?

There is a lot of confusion at first. Sri Lankan society teaches that people can only be one way [straight] or that bisexuality is a stage or a phase, and one doesn't stay that way for very long. But once past the confusion, you'll know you are a bisexual as surely as your friends know they are straight.

I know that I'm a bisexual because I've always been equally attracted to males and females. I've never been attracted to or interested in just one gender.

Shafni, 20

I like both males and females and I get attracted to both sexes. So I think I'm bisexual and I have no problem with the feelings I have.

Sandi, 21

Determining your sexuality can be confusing. Young persons in Sri Lanka often feel a lot of pressure to choose to define themselves as being heterosexual rather than homosexual or bisexual.

You might feel that you do not fit this category of heterosexuality. Fitting into a sexuality 'norm' is difficult in this country. You may notice that you are 'turned on' and have sexual feelings about both your own and the other genders. These feelings indicate that you may identify as bisexual. There is no test for bisexuality.

A bisexual person may have one committed relationship that lasts for many years. Many bisexual people have no sexual relationships or have relationships with people of only one gender; however they still consider themselves bisexual.

Some people have relationships with people of their own and the other gender yet do not identify as bisexual. It all comes down to what makes you most comfortable and how you perceive yourself. Don't worry about not knowing for sure. Sexuality develops over time and you should not feel pressured to identify in any particular way.

# Am I Normal?

You are normal. Sexuality is just another part of what makes each person an individual. Being bisexual is very natural.



I think bisexuality is a normal thing nowadays. So I think I am a normal person. I don't think there is anything wrong with being the way I am.

Mayuri, 19

I don't think there's anything wrong with how I feel. I have feelings for both males and females; I don't think that makes me any less normal than other people.

Nalin, 21

Yes, it is perfectly natural for some people to be bisexual and feel attracted to people of each gender. Sexual feelings towards women and men are perfectly natural and normal for bisexual people. In Sri Lanka, society does not encourage or accept bisexuality and that can make accepting your own bisexuality more difficult. But just like straight people, you are perfectly normal.



# What is it like to be **young and bisexual?**

I block out all the negativity and focus on the positive and I try my best to live my own life as happily as I can. Being bisexual actually is a lot of fun!

Kayal, 22

I can spend my life happily. I try to gain knowledge by readings books and magazines on other bisexual characters and celebrities. I think most of them live happy lives so I try to do my best to lead a happy life being a bisexual.

Nishan, 19

There is no particular lifestyle attached to bisexuality. Bisexual persons come in all shapes and sizes, from all sorts of occupations and with all levels of education. Bisexuals may or may not be in relationships.

Your sexual orientation does not determine who you are or what you do. There is no particular lifestyle attached to bisexuality and the experience may be different for each individual. Like other bisexuals you may or may not be involved in sexual relationships.

Bisexuality is not accepted in Sri Lanka so you may suffer discrimination or violence based on misconceptions & prejudice, thus being bisexual may be difficult.

Organizations such as **EQUALGROUND** in Colombo Sri Lanka work for bisexual rights and try to alleviate misconceptions about bisexuality and bisexual people.

# How can I avoid HIV other STIs and involvement in unintended pregnancy?

Abstinence from sexual intercourse is the surest way to avoid unintended pregnancy, HIV and other STIs. Many young people-gay, straight or bisexual-choose activities other than sex to show affection such as hugging, kissing, talking and texting.

If you do choose to have sexual intercourse, be responsible and protect yourself and your partner. Depending on the gender of the people involved in the relationship, there are several things you should consider:



- Woman & Woman - use a barrier (such as a dental dam, latex gloves or plastic wrap) to reduce the risk of HIV/STI transmission.
- Woman & Man - use a condom at every act of anal, oral or vaginal intercourse to reduce the risk of HIV transmission and pregnancy. For best results use another form of birth control and a condom.
- Man & Man - use a condom and plenty of lubricant at every act of intercourse. Use a condom for oral intercourse as well.



For any sexual relationship, remember to always use water based lubricants with condoms. Oil based lubricants can break down latex (which condoms are made of). Remember that blood-to-blood contact is the most direct route for HIV transmission. Sharing equipment or needles-for using drugs, taking medications or piercing or tattooing the body is dangerous since blood may be left on the used equipment or needles. Always use new needles and other equipment or else clean the needles/equipment by rinsing several times with bleach, then with water.

## How do I learn to like myself?

Know that you are special, you are not an anomaly. Surround yourself with supportive people.

The only way you will like yourself is to be yourself. Don't let other people's bigotry make you feel bad about who you are.

I work hard in order to have a good life; I am truly happy with my life and try not to think about my burdens too much. I think that is the best way to live your life ...to the fullest.  
Amal, 20

I felt like I chose this sort of life...in the sense that I can't pick which gender to love...because I have feelings for both. That's something I have to deal with, so now I love myself for the person that I am.  
Seshadrie, 20

Coming to terms with your bisexuality can be very difficult, even more so in a setting such as we have here in Sri Lanka. However, many people have difficulty learning to like themselves, regardless of their sexual orientation. Many people also have difficulty understanding bisexuality and homosexuality. In an effort to numb the effects of social stigma, bisexual youth may turn to drugs and alcohol and may even attempt suicide because their situation seems unbearable. Millions of other bisexual people- just like you - lead successful, happy lives. It helps to be informed and to know that you aren't alone. Read about bisexuality. Be informed.



# Do you want to learn more?

In Sri Lanka EQUAL GROUND affords sensitizing and educational programs for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Questioning (LGBTIQ) community. Log on the website at [www.equal-ground.org](http://www.equal-ground.org) or 'like' us on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/EQUALGROUND>) or call us at 011-5679766 or 011-5734530. Alternatively, the internet provides a host of International organizations such as Advocates for Youth (<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/>) who have web sites by and for young gay people. Others include Youth Resource ([www.youthresource.com](http://www.youthresource.com)), IGLYO (<http://www.iglyo.com/>) and Stop Bullying now (<http://stopbullyingnow.com/lgbt-youth/>).

You may wish to visit these web sites. Thousands of LGBTIQ youth visit them each month; most of them visit repeatedly. Or, you may want to visit or get involved with EQUAL GROUND's LGBT youth group in Colombo and learn about yourself and others like you.

Just remember that there are bisexual people wherever you are. Sooner or later you will meet someone who feels some of the same things you do and has had similar experiences.

Realizing that you are not the only bisexual person will make liking yourself a lot easier.

# Whom should I tell?

It's a good idea not to come out until you are comfortable with your bisexuality. Don't come out because you feel you must, because people are pressuring you, or because you want to be cool and make an impression. Come to think of it, those are also not good reasons to stay in the closet. Just take it at your own pace. This isn't about other people, only you. Coming out can be very liberating and empowering but can also sometimes be negative due to social and cultural homophobia in Sri Lanka.



I didn't have an idea at first, I didn't tell anyone. I just tried to live normally the best way I could. I felt that I would become vulnerable the instant I told people. For this reason I kept being bisexual to myself and I am happy with it for now.  
Shezri, 22

I told my friends who are my age and who I feel comfortable with, and that was a good decision. Unlike before I have no secrets to hide from them. This made it easy for me to be myself around them and express myself and my opinions in a carefree manner.  
Kanchana, 21



Coming to terms with your own sexuality can be very difficult. In fact, the hardest person you may ever have to tell is yourself! Only tell others when you feel you are ready. It's not always easy. Some people might be very receptive, while others might not be able to handle the information as well as you had hoped they would.

Sometimes it might be easier to talk about your sexuality with someone you know will understand, such as a friend, sibling, parent or other trusted adult. You may also find someone to talk with through the LGBTIQ counseling hotline or at youth groups. Reaching out can help ensure you have support as you talk about your sexuality. You might be surprised at the relief you will feel when you know others understand you.

Additionally, **EQUALGROUND** has many publications such as "Stepping Out of the Shadows: for parents of children with alternate sexual orientations and gender identities" that can assist with educating and informing parents and others of your sexual orientation, if you wish to come out to them.



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# How can I meet other **bisexual** people?

It may be difficult to believe, but bisexual people are all around you! How can you meet them?

Being a member of a community LGBTIQ youth group in your area is a great way to meet people, just like you.

**EQUALGROUND** offers young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or Questioning persons (LGBTIQ) youth the space to hold group meetings, share information and experiences and conduct workshops on pertinent subjects such as sexuality, gender based violence, human rights, HIV/AIDS etc. It also provides space for young LGBTIQ persons to conduct social outreach work in rural areas to encourage others like you to find each other. For more information, call or email **EQUALGROUND**.

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“Equality for all Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities:  
Human Rights for everyone”

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