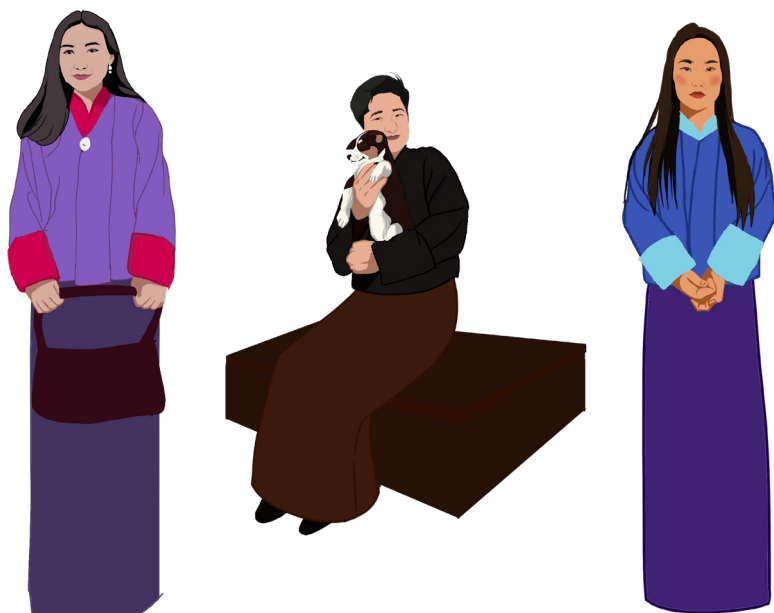


I think I Might Be Lesbian

An information booklet for young people

QUEER VOICES OF BHUTAN



Disclaimer:

This material is developed as an informative booklet and may contain basic information on safe sex and condom use. This material may only be appropriate for individuals who are at least 13 years and above.

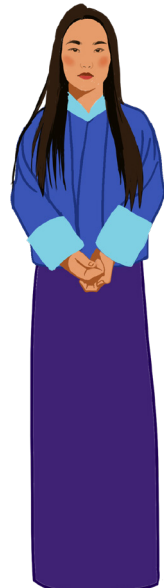
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What does it mean to be lesbian?



A lesbian is a woman who is physically, sexually, emotionally and/or spiritually attracted to other women.

Their feelings towards other women are normal and natural. Some women may use different language to describe themselves, such as umbrella terms like 'gay' or 'queer'. Different people may be comfortable with different languages, and it's always better to ask for and respect their preference.



How do I know I'm Lesbian?

“When I was 10, I had a crush on my classmate. Everyone told me my “crush” had to be a boy. I asked the librarian why this was happening and she said, ‘umm, I’ve never seen a Bhutanese do that but westerners do, so it must be normal.’ I learnt to just accept and embrace it.”

Sonam Choden, 22

Being lesbian is definitely okay! It’s completely normal and nothing new. Lesbians have always existed.

Figuring out your sexual orientation may be difficult, or confusing, or take time. And that’s okay. Some lesbians know from a young age that they aren’t attracted to boys and like girls instead. Some may have relationships with men, sex with men or even love men before they realize they’re attracted to women. These are just two examples of how someone might know, and they’re both valid.

If you think you might be lesbian, try asking yourself these questions:

- When I dream or fantasize sexually, do I think about other girls?
- Can I picture myself dating, having sex with, loving or being married to a woman?

- Have I ever had a crush on or been in love with another girl?
- How are my feelings towards men and women different?
- Do I feel uncomfortable or different from my straight friends when they talk about the guys they like?

It's okay if you don't have answers for these questions yet, or if your feelings are still unclear. Discovering your sexuality can take time, and sometimes how you identify can change. It's normal for sexuality to develop over time. Only you will know to label yourself correctly.



What is it like to be a lesbian?

“It makes me feel different. Special sometimes, like I have a gift to connect with the femininity of the universe. Sometimes, I don’t feel confident and worry about how people may react. But at the end of the day, I feel happy that I’m being true to myself and allowing myself to be with the person I truly love.”

Sonam Choden, 22

There is no right way or wrong way to be a lesbian. Growing up with society’s stereotypes about lesbians might make you think you have to be a certain way if you are a lesbian. But your sexual and romantic orientation is only one part of who you are. You probably have hobbies and interests that are the same as those of some of your straight friends.

Some lesbians may be worried about their friends or peers’ responses. Some might be uncomfortable talking about sexuality with family or friends, while others may feel confident having these discussions. There isn’t one right or wrong way to feel about your sexuality, coming to terms with it or coming out, if you choose.

Finding people who will support you in your journey can help make it easier. Social media has enabled young people to connect and find other LGBTQ young people.

Finding a community may be difficult at first, but it's important to feel connected to and supported by people who understand you. Many people have blogs or YouTube channels where they talk about their experiences.



Should I/How do I come out?



“It wasn’t really easy to be accepted. Additionally, I had a lot of insecurities. I first came out to my mother. She found it funny at first but later, as she realised I wasn’t joking, she accepted me. Eventually, people thought I was amazing and bold to show myself as I am.”

YeshiDe, 18

“I still haven’t opened up to my family but a few friends know. Sometimes it bothers me, but I’ve come to accept myself for who I am and celebrate it. Love is love, and I’m willing to let myself love the way I’m meant to.”

Tashi, 30

Coming out is the process of accepting your sexuality, figuring out how open you want to be about it and telling those you want to know. You don’t have to come out if you don’t want to, before you’re ready, or be open about your sexuality to everyone. If you do choose to come out, it’s important to put your safety first.

Start by choosing someone you trust, like a close friend, a sibling, parent, or a counsellor to confide in. There may be a wide range of reactions and having someone to talk to can help. Some people don't understand what it means to be lesbian and it may be hard to know who will listen and be supportive. Some friends will accept you. Others may turn away from you or tell other people without your permission.

Telling your family can sometimes be difficult. Some families are highly supportive, and some are not. You may choose to tell everyone or very few people, or somewhere in between. Coming out is very personal — there is no wrong way to do it. When LGBTQIA+ youth accept their sexuality, most say they feel calmer, happier, and more confident.



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