

## Am I a Lesbian?



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## **What is Compulsory Heterosexuality?**

“Compulsory” is the opposite of “optional”. “Compulsory heterosexuality” is exactly what it sounds like - being straight is something our culture tries to force on us.

It affects people of every gender, but it’s mostly been studied as something that affects women. This is because compulsory heterosexuality easily ties in with the misogyny that causes women’s sexualities and even identities to be defined by our relationships with men.

Women are taught from a very early age that making men happy is our job. We’re supposed to be pretty for men, we’re supposed to change the way we talk so men will take us more seriously, we’re supposed to want a man’s love more than anything else. Our magazines are full of sex tips on how to better please men, our movies are about how we’re supposed to fall in love with men. We literally cannot exist in public without men loudly grading us on how well we’re pleasing them visually.

So... what happens if you want to be with women? What happens if you’re not attracted to men at all? When you’re trained from childhood to see romantic/sexual relationships with men - and only men - as major life goals, how do you separate that from what *you* want?

Compulsory heterosexuality is the voice in my head that says I must really be het *even when I’m in love with a woman*. Compulsory heterosexuality is what forces lesbians to struggle through learning the difference between what you’ve been *taught*

you want (being with men) and what you *do* want (being with women), which is why so many lesbians have dated men at some point.

Compulsory heterosexuality is very similar to heteronormativity - the assumption that straight is the default. We're trained from birth to believe that we will find someone of the other binary gender, fall in love, have sex, etc. In a million tiny ways we're taught that only relationships with the other binary gender are valid. (And if you're *not* one of the binary genders, this can be even more confusing.)

Compulsory heterosexuality is built into you from the moment you're born into this time and place, and it takes a long time to dismantle it.

## **How do I know if I'm a lesbian?**

If you're questioning if you're a lesbian, it's way more important to ask yourself if you can be truthfully happy with a man than if you're attracted to them. Ask yourself if you can have healthy fulfilling relationships with men and actually wanna be with them.

You can be attracted to men or not know if you are because of compulsory heterosexuality and it doesn't mean you want to be with them. Attraction is supposed to feel good. If being in relationships with men isn't appealing to you, if you can't truly see yourself ending up happy in relationships with men, or if your attraction to men makes you uncomfortable, you may be a lesbian. Lesbian isn't a dirty word and being a lesbian is beautiful.

Many lesbians STILL struggle with compulsory heterosexuality even when they know they don't want men. If you love women but feel fake about it, just remember that those feelings are the product of a patriarchal society which has conditioned you to believe the false idea that you are defined by your ties to men. this can be really difficult to remember at times, and it might take you a while before you can fully love women without feeling like you're somehow "wrong", but just know that there are a million other women who are in the same boat as you are, meaning that this is a problem with society and not with you.

## **But I like fictional men/male celebrities..**

Lesbians are allowed to like male celebrities and fictional characters. it's usually a symptom of compulsory heterosexuality—male celebrities/fictional characters are completely unobtainable crushes and thus it allows the lesbian in question to distance themselves from men. Because it's impossible to ever be with that person, they get to avoid the romance and intimacy, which is usually something that girls can recognize that they don't want with men but can't exactly place why or what it means. Even if the attraction to male celebrities/fictional characters is NOT an effect of compulsory heterosexuality (which would be really hard to figure out), it's not fair that straight women can have "girl crushes" and straight men can have "man crushes" without anyone telling them they can't be/aren't straight anymore, so the reverse should not be applied to lesbians.

## **But I think I've Liked men before?**

You can identify as a lesbian if you've liked men in the past but no longer are attracted to men or want to pursue relationships with them. Lots of lesbians have dated or had genuine relationships with men before realizing they were lesbians, and that doesn't make them any less of a lesbian. If you don't care about men or would no longer like to be with them, you can be a lesbian now. It's a "now" identity - it matters how you feel now! You're not interested in men, so you can ID as lesbian regardless of how you've felt in the past. If you ID as lesbian now, and then meet a man and fall for him, it would be wrong to call yourself a lesbian but having a relationship with a man in the past doesn't mean you can't be a lesbian now.

Many lesbians have previously liked men at some point in their lives before realizing they are lesbians. Now a common misconception is also that everyone is born knowing they are gay and that's not necessarily true. It can be because of both nature AND nurture. If you have had terrible experiences with men and now would like to no longer date them because you don't see yourself being truly happy with a man and would only like to date women, you can be a lesbian too. It's okay to try on the lesbian identity and see how it fits you because many lesbians were unsure of how they felt about men until they identified as lesbians. This helped them realize how much of what they felt for men was actually compulsory heterosexuality over time.

If you think you feel attraction towards men but don't want to date or be with them and instead want to date and be with women, then you CAN be a lesbian. Lesbian doesn't

need to mean “only experiences attraction to women”, it can mean “only feels comfortable, only prefers, and only prioritizes women & relationships with them”. Many lesbians have found out this way that their “attraction” to men was in fact compulsory heterosexuality.

Attraction is super complicated. It’s possible to recognize a man IS attractive but not be attracted TO him. Attraction is often coerced by societal conditioning and some lesbians have hypothetical attraction to men due to compulsory heterosexuality. But we don’t want to actually date or have sex with a man ever. Allowing people to identify based on where they are willing to put their romantic and sexual energy is more powerful and gives people agency.



## **Conflicting Feelings About Men**

You can really, genuinely have warm, positive, strong feelings towards men and they can still be compulsory heterosexuality. Compulsory heterosexuality is the assumption that any feelings that you have towards a man MUST be attraction because society talks all the time about hetero love and attraction so when you feel something towards a man you think “oh, this must be what it’s like”. Then as part of “discovering your sexuality” you try to find ways that you find men attractive. You think “i’m not attracted to physical appearance, only personalities” or “i only like feminine men” or you find ways to make yourself aroused by men by imagining them in all kinds of unusual scenarios until you hit one that appeals to you

Then when you can’t follow through with this ‘attraction’ in real life scenarios when you have a chance to have a romantic/sexual relationship with a man you assume that’s it’s some broken part of you that’s stopping you, or some quirk of your personality, or a circumstance of your life (“i have high standards” or “i only like older men” or “i have some incredibly obscure made-up sexuality where i only like men until they like me back”), and you explain away why you’re unable to find an attainable man in real life who you’re attracted to.

This is something that’s really difficult to recognise because in the process of figuring out your sexuality you question how you feel and you come back with “well i definitely have strong feelings for men” and assume you’re straight or bisexual. But another

important thing to question is “have i correctly labelled and understood what this feeling is and am i certain that it’s actually attraction”

Society puts so much emphasis on the importance and intensity of heterosexual love and attraction that it’s important to actively remind yourself that it’s possible to love someone and have a deep interest in them without having romantic or sexual feelings towards them (especially if that love comes along with another intense interest, like your feelings towards a fictional man in a tv show you love).

## **Signs of Compulsory Heterosexuality**

If you relate to or identify with a lot of these things, I'd say it's worth an investigation into why so many of these things resonate with you. Is it because you have a specific taste in men or because society has conditioned you to want this? Is it because you have bad experiences with men related to trauma or because these kinds of desires have been ingrained into you? In no way are these all the experiences of lesbians who once thought they liked men, but these are the most common ones from lesbians I have gathered.

### **'Attraction' to men**

- Deciding which guys to be attracted to – not to date, but to be *attracted to* – based on how well they match a mental list of attractive qualities. You have a 'list' of impossible criteria in your head that a man must meet for you to be attracted to him, and if you ever meet someone who matches all the criteria you just add more impossible standards.
- I'm constantly testing my attraction to men. I pick one or more conventionally attractive men in the room, and try to force myself to be attracted to them.
- I like the idea of being with a man, but any time a man makes a move on me I get incredibly uncomfortable.
- I do not like the reality of men, only the idea of being with men.
- I like the idea of marrying a man/being in a relationship with a man, but I can always pick out a reason to not want to date any man that is interested in me or any man suggested to me. These reasons are sometimes reasonable, but often insignificant (i.e. "I don't like guys who do their hair like that, he has a weird mole on his face, he's too tall").

- I can fantasize about men and find men attractive, but thinking about *realistically* being with a man makes my stomach churn.
- Only developing attraction to a guy after a female friend expresses attraction to him
- I like getting attention from men and being validated in my attractiveness, but the moment it goes from attention to an interaction (i.e. from flirting to asking out) I start panicking.
- Getting jealous of a specific female friend's relationships with guys and assuming you must be attracted to the guys she's with (even if you never really noticed them before she was interested in them)
- You view relationships with men as a chore, burden, or just something you must deal with.
- Confusing a strong emotional connection/dependency with a man for romantic feelings, can be due to mental illness.
- You get crushes on just about every guy you're friendly with, because there's really no difference between friendships and crushes to you
- You feel like you could theoretically be attracted to men (you may even have fantasies about them), but in practice you never have any feelings for them.
- Picking a guy at random to be attracted to
- Choosing to be attracted to a guy at all, not just choosing to act on it but flipping your attraction on like a switch – that's a common lesbian thing.
- Having such high standards that literally no guy meets them – and feeling no spark of attraction to any guy who doesn't meet them
- You're far more certain about being attracted to women than you are about being attracted to men
- Only/mostly being into guys who are gender nonconforming or feminine in some way.
- Alternatively, the guys I like are always a hyper masculine man's man who embodies everything about manliness.

- You want to date/fall in love/get married/have kids/etc with a guy, but the guy you dream about is never specific and may as well be a cardboard cutout
- All of my fantasies around men are always with faceless, nameless men; the more realistic the fantasy and the more details about my partner I invent, the less excited and into the fantasy I become.
- Only/mostly being attracted to unattainable, disinterested, or fictional guys or guys you never or rarely interact with. (Such as teachers, married or older men, and men that live far away)
- Similar to only crushing on famous or fictional men, the men you like may be gay or in relationships as they are also unattainable (if they are in a relationship, you may even start to wonder if it's actually the woman you have a crush on)
- You lose all attraction or get extremely uncomfortable if there are any implications that they might like you back. You get deeply uncomfortable and losing all interest in these unattainable guys if they ever indicate they might reciprocate
- You mistake the desire for male approval as attraction. You don't necessarily want a relationship with men, but you want men to want a relationship with you.
- Reading your anxiety/discomfort/nervousness/combativeness around men as attraction to them. Confusing your anxiety around men for "butterflies" or being flustered.
- Reading a desire to be attractive to men as attraction to them
- Having a lot of your 'guy' crushes later turn out to be trans women
- You wish you weren't attracted to men / You wish you were a lesbian

## **Relationships with men**

- Dreading what feels like an inevitable domestic future with a man
- Or looking forward to an idealized version of it that resembles literally no m/f relationship you've ever seen in your life, never being able to picture any man you've actually met in that image
- You have every reason to be happy in your relationship with a man, but you just aren't / everything is going really well, but something is missing and you can't figure out what
- Being repulsed by the dynamics of most/all real life m/f relationships you've seen and/or regularly feeling like "maybe it works for them but I never want my relationship to be like that"
- Thinking you're commitmentphobic because no relationship, no matter how great the guy, feels quite right and you drag your feet when it comes time to escalate it
- Going along with escalation because it seems like the 'appropriate time' or bc the guy wants it so bad, even if you personally aren't quite ready to say I love you or have labels or move in together etc.
- Or jumping ahead and trying to rush to the 'comfortably settled' part of relationships with guys, trying to make a relationship a done deal without investing time into emotional closeness
- Your relationships with men are devoid of passion.
- Feeling like you have to have relationships with guys and/or let them get serious in order to prove something, maybe something nebulous you can't identify
- Only having online relationships with guys; preferring not to look at the guys you're interacting with online; choosing not to meet up with a guy even if you seem very into him and he reciprocates and meeting up is totally realistic

- Getting a boyfriend mostly so other people know you have a boyfriend and not really being interested in him romantically/sexually
- Wishing your boyfriend was more like your female friends
- Wishing your boyfriend was less interested in romance and/or sex with you and that you could just hang out as pals
- Thinking you're really in love with a guy but being able to get over him in such record time that you pretend to be more affected than you are so your friends don't think you're heartless
- After a breakup, missing having a boyfriend more than you miss the specific guy you were with
- Worrying that you're broken inside and unable to really love anyone

### **Sex and Intimacy with men**

- Having sex not out of desire for the physical pleasure or emotional closeness but because you like feeling wanted
- OR: preferring to 'be a tease' to feel wanted but feeling like following through is a chore
- Having to be drunk or high to have sex with men
- The idea of kissing, cuddling, dating and/or having sex with men is really scary/anxiety inducing, and the idea of doing any of those things with women isn't (or is noticeably less scary)
- Your fantasies about men still somehow turn out to be a little gay. Maybe you're penetrating him, you don't have to look at his face/don't want to look at his face, you want a threesome with another woman, he's very feminine, etc. It might be a "straight fantasy" but you've altered it in a way straight people might not be totally interested in.

- Thinking because you don't like/pursue sex with men you must be asexual. Or vice versa with romance for men.
- Your fantasies about men give you intense distress or anxiety. They could be intrusive thoughts, forms of self-harm, or otherwise.
- When I think about guys, I think about all the things that I could tolerate doing with them (dating, kissing, sex, marriage) but always in terms of what I could force myself to do, not what I want to do.
- Being around guys that are interested in me gives me intense anxiety.
- feeling weird/wrong calling your past boyfriends pet names or showing them pda, but gladly showing your girl friend's pda.
- Only being comfortable with sex with men if there's an extreme power imbalance and your desires aren't centred
- Using sex with men as a form of self-harm
- You don't have much of an emotional reaction to kissing or being otherwise physical with a man, or you even dislike/hate it
- Feeling numb or dissociating or crying during/after sex with men (even if you don't understand that reaction and think you're fine and crying etc for no reason)
- Being bored with sex with men/not understanding what the big deal is that makes other women want it
- Doing it anyway out of obligation or a desire to be a good sport/do something nice for him
- Never/rarely having sexual fantasies about specific men, preferring to leave them as undetailed as possible or not thinking about men at all while fantasizing
- Having to make a concerted effort to fantasize about the guy you're "attracted" to



## **Early interest in women**

- Not recognizing past/current crushes on women until you've come to grips with your attraction to women.
- Being unusually competitive, shy, or eager to impress specific women when you're not that way with anyone else
- Wanting to kiss your female best friend on the mouth for literally any reason ("to practice for boys" included)
- Getting butterflies or feeling like you can't get close enough when cuddling with a close female friend
- Looking at a close female friend and feeling something in your chest clench up and being overwhelmed with love for her - love you may read as platonic
- Having had strong and abiding feelings of admiration for a specific female teacher, actor, etc., growing up that were deep and reverent
- Having had an unusually close relationship with a female friend growing up that was different and special in a way you couldn't articulate
- Thinking relationships would be simpler "if only I were attracted to women/my best friend who would be perfect for me if she/I weren't a girl"
- When a female friend is treated badly by a man, having your protective thoughts turn in the direction of "if I was him/a man I'd never do that to her/my girlfriend"
- Being utterly fascinated by any lesbians you know/see in media and thinking they're all ultra cool people
- Having your favourite character in every show be that one gay-coded or butch-looking woman (like Shogo from Kim Possible or Starbuck from Battlestar Galactica)

- Feeling weirdly guilty and uncomfortable in locker rooms etc., when your female friends are less clothed than they normally would be around men and being more careful not to look than they are

### **The ‘straight’ version of you**

- Thinking that all straight girls feel at least some attraction to women
- Thinking that your interest in seeing attractive women/scantily clad women/boobs is an artificial reaction caused by the objectification of women in media
- Being really into how women look “aesthetically”/“just as artistic interest”
- Thinking it’s objective and uncontested that almost all women are way more attractive than most men
- Being a really intense LGBT+ “ally” and getting weirdly emotional about homophobia but assuming you’re just a Really Good Ally and v empathetic
- Having like half your friend group from school turn out to be LGBT+
- Getting emotional or having a strong reaction you don’t understand to f/f love stories etc.
- Having had people think you were gay when you had no suspicion you were gay

### **Exploring attraction to women**

- Feeling like you could live with a woman in a romantic way, even if you can’t imagine doing anything sexual with a woman
- Feeling like you could enjoy sexual interaction with a woman, even if you can’t imagine having romantic feelings for a woman

- Thinking you couldn't be a lesbian because you're not attractive enough, cool enough, or otherwise in the same league as most of the women you know
- Interacting with het sex/romance in media by imagining yourself in the man's position or just never/rarely imagining yourself in the woman's position
- Really focusing on the women in heterosexual porn
- Being really into the idea of kissing/being sexual with a woman 'to turn guys on'
- Being really annoyed when guys actually do express interest in watching or joining in when you do that
- Only feeling/expressing attraction to or sexual interest in women when you're inebriated or otherwise impaired
- Seeing a relationship between two women elicits a much stronger and more real emotional reaction than het relationships ever do
- You get anxiety around men and feel more comfortable in settings with women
- You have very high standards for men you might date, and comparatively lower standards when it comes to women
- Being mistaken for a couple with one of your (girl) friends is exciting for you, and being mistaken for a couple with one of your (guy) friends elicits no reaction or feels weird or wrong
- none of your girl friend's partners are ever good enough for them, and you take it very personally, and you don't feel the same way about the men you're friends with

## **Gender Feelings**

- Having a lot of conflicting gender feelings that are only possible to resolve once you understand you are/can be a lesbian
- Thinking that being gnc and feeling a disconnect from traditional womanhood mean that you can't be a woman even if that's what feels closest to right - many lesbians are gnc and many lesbians feel disconnected from traditional womanhood since it's so bound up in heteropatriarchy
- Knowing you're attracted to women and not being able to parse that (esp + any gender nonconformance) as gay, taking a long time to figure out if you're a straight man or a lesbian
- Being dysphoric about the parts of you that make straight men think your body is owed to them, having to figure out what that dysphoria means for/to you
- Knowing you're attracted to women, but feeling weirdly guilty and uncomfortable trying to interact with them as a straight man, and only later realizing you're actually a trans lesbian
- Knowing you're gay, but experiencing a lot of the symptoms of comp het when you try to interact with men romantically/sexually, and only later realizing you're a trans lesbian and not a gay man
- Being nonbinary and taking a long time to sort through being able to respect/understand your nonbinary identity and your lesbianness at the same time

## **Considering lesbianism**

- Wanting to be a lesbian but feeling like if you don't already know you are one you can't be
- Feeling guilty about wanting to be a lesbian, feeling like you're just attention-seeking or trying to be trendy
- You think, or fear, that you might be a lesbian, and you find yourself somewhat constantly/desperately trying to prove to yourself that you're not
- Suppressing your lesbian dreams because you think exploring that desire would mean you're a bad/homophobic person using lesbianness selfishly
- Wishing you were a lesbian to escape the discomfort of dating men
- Fantasizing about how much fun it would be to be a lesbian and just be with women/a specific woman, but thinking that can't be for you
- Worrying that some of your past attraction to men was actually real so you can't be a lesbian
- Worrying that bc you can't be 100% sure you're not attracted to men and can't be 100% sure you won't change your mind, you can't be a lesbian
- Worrying that you only want to be a lesbian because of trauma and that means your lesbianness would be Fake
- Worrying that trauma-induced complications in how you experience sex (e.g., a habit of self-harming via sex w men or a fear of any sex at all) mean you're not a Real Lesbian

## **Attraction VS. Compulsory Heterosexuality**

### **Nervousness and Blushing**

A ton of romance media and common cultural tropes have this idea that you know you're attracted to someone if you're nervous or blushing around them. Because of this, you might feel like you must be attracted to a man if you feel nervous around him, just because you're experiencing the physical bodily response you've been told to expect, not because you actually want to date him.

**Actual Attraction:** You're nervous *because* you're excited to get to know someone. You find them attractive *first* and because you're thinking about your attraction to them, you get self conscious because you hope they might like you too.

**Compulsory Heterosexuality:** You're nervous because you are aware that *he* is attracted to you, and because he's paying such close attention to you— especially if he's pushing boundaries or getting too close into your personal space— you become self conscious because you know he's watching you. You blush because you're uncomfortable.

### **Hypothetical Attraction**

Many questioning women have a hard time sorting through their attraction because of hypotheticals. Our culture, in general, disregards or challenges wlw's attraction and it gives this anxiety that we need to know 100% that we are not and will never be attracted to men no matter what in order to claim labels.

It's hard to do that as a young person who is just learning about themselves, flooded with “what if”s about the future. Because of this, you might feel like you can't rule out being attracted to men because you *might* hypothetically be attracted to one someday. Who knows?

**Actual Attraction:** You imagine a hypothetical future where you end up with a man and it feels exciting and makes you feel good and hopeful and happy and right. It's a nice feeling and is comfortable to think about. Reassuring.

**Compulsory Heterosexuality:** You imagine a hypothetical future where you end up with a man and it makes you feel uncomfortable, scared, sad, disappointed, wrong. It's an upsetting thing to think about and you hope it doesn't happen. You don't want to end up with a man even if you feel like you could.

### **Sexual Fantasies**

Our culture places a big emphasis on sex when it comes to orientation. Some people's orientation includes sexual attraction and some people's orientation doesn't, but most of us feel like our sexual fantasies are the most important indicator of non-straight sexuality because LGBT people have been so thoroughly reduced to sexual acts and sexual objects in the homophobic culture we've grown up in.

Along with that, we've also grown up in a heteronormative and cisnormative society that repetitively teaches and reemphasizes the same singular sexual "script" for how sex is supposed to go, over and over and over. They do not teach any others, and it requires non-straight and non-cis people to invent their own sexual scripts individually and with partners.

But as a young person, when you're aroused, your mind has a very limited template of potential narratives associated with that feeling, so many people default to the same heteronormative script in their fantasies because it's unconscious and easy. Because of this, you might feel like you *must* be attracted to men because you imagine abstract situations of sex with men, even though you have absolutely no desire to sleep with men in real life.

**Actual Attraction:** When you fantasize about men, it is because you're attracted to their bodies or specific men or the idea of having sex with men. You imagine qualities of their body and you like the idea of what you're imagining. If you think about the fantasy later that day, you might feel like it's embarrassing, but you also feel like it's sexy.

**Compulsory Heterosexuality:** When you fantasize about men, it is mostly just enacting a kind of narrative. More focused on movement than features— the men in your fantasies might be faceless or blank-featured or their bodies might symbolize some emotion. You don't really like the idea of what you're imagining. You might not even be in the fantasy, but instead another faceless woman might be. You might even imagine yourself as the man. The narrative follows the sexual script, but the details are more vague and abstract and might even shift and change throughout the fantasy. If you think about it later that day, you might feel vaguely nauseated or uncomfortable or feel invalidated and wrong.

It's really difficult to unroot compulsory heterosexuality. My simplest advice on getting through it is this: even if you *are* attracted to men, you **do not** need to date them if you don't want to. If you only want to date other women, then you have the right to that. The rest is less important than the simple reality of what you want right now.



## You might be a lesbian if TL;DR

- You wish you were a lesbian so you could escape the discomfort of dating men.
- Men are okay in theory but terrible in practice.
- You feel like you could live with a woman in a romantic way, even if you can't imagine doing anything sexual with a woman.
- You feel like you could enjoy sexual interaction with a woman, even if you can't imagine having romantic feelings for a woman.
- You lose interest in a man as soon as they seem interested in you - **very common**.
- You find yourself trying to be romantically or sexually appealing to men even if you're not interested in them.
- As a child you always thought you'd either never get married or platonically marry a friend.
- You can't imagine having a happy and fulfilling future with a man.
- You feel like you're performing your attraction to men, for yourself and/or other people.
- You expect relationships with men to be unfulfilling by default.
- You like the idea of men being attracted to you, but you dislike the idea of being attracted to men.
- You dislike being attracted to men in general.
- You only notice the attractiveness of a man when someone else points it out.
- You think your feelings for women don't count, or that all women have feelings "like that" but that they're not valid because you think it's a phase everyone goes through.
- You don't want to date men, but you feel like you have to.
- You think that because you could survive dating, marrying, and/or having sex with a man, you're attracted to men (hint: you don't have to settle for just surviving).

- You think it's objective and uncontested that almost all women are way more attractive than most men.
- The men in your fantasies are faceless or symbolise an emotion.
- You don't like fantasising about men. After fantasising about men you feel uncomfortable or wrong.
- When fantasising about men, you're not really into the man in your fantasy, or the fantasy itself. You imagine another woman in place of yourself or imagine that you're the man in the fantasy.
- Lesbian or gay feels like the label for you but you still doubt yourself for whatever reason.
- You're only attracted to fictional men, celebrities, or men that are **completely** unattainable (i.e. your teacher, gay men, men in established relationships). Basically, you only like men if it's impossible for them to like you back - **very common**.
- You prefer/are exclusively attracted to "feminine" men, (i.e. men that wear traditionally feminine clothing, have traditionally feminine behaviors or appearances, and like traditionally feminine things) basically you only like men if they're "womanly" enough.
- You're repulsed by the dynamics of most/all real life m/f relationships you've seen and/or regularly feeling like "maybe it works for them but I never want my relationship to be like that".
- You think you might commitment-phobic because no relationship, no matter how great the guy, feels quite right and you drag your feet when the time comes to escalate it.
- When you do escalate a relationship with a man, you do it mostly because you feel like he wants to, or because it's the appropriate thing to do.

- You think your interest in seeing attractive women stems from the sexualisation and objectification of women in media.
- You think all straight women feel attraction to women to at least some extent (hint: 100% straight women do exist).
- You think you have to learn how to love men.
- You find yourself wishing you were a lesbian because it'd be so much easier to just be with women for the rest of your life.
- You think men-attracted women over-exaggerate their attraction to men and you can't comprehend finding a man as attractive as they do.
- You can't imagine being so invested in a man/relationship with a man or valuing a man/relationship with a man as much as men-attracted women.
- You dread the idea of a future with a man.
- Men expressing their attraction to men is more relatable than women expressing their attraction for men (there's something specific about same-gender attraction that any form of it is just more relatable than different gender attraction).
- You think you just have to give men a chance.
- You feel very uncomfortable reading or watching m/f erotica, or even just general m/f romantic interactions.
- Other people tell you you're acting like an over-invested lesbian ally or you feel like you are acting like an over-invested lesbian ally.
- You think your relationships with men don't work out because you're bad at relationships in general.
- You think you just have high standards and that's why you don't want to date any men.
- You think you're just a late bloomer and will be attracted to men eventually.

- You just. Pick a dude at random to be attracted to.
- The only men you're attracted to are those who hurt you, harass you, or abuse you.
- You think it's impossible for lesbians to have a happy future with women but you think you could be the exception to the rule (this ties in with internalised homophobia).
- Do you love them because they're your boyfriend or are they your boyfriend because you love them? If it's the first, you might not actually be attracted to them.
- You go through past memories trying to prove your attraction to men ("But I had a boyfriend when I was 13!").
- You put yourself through having romantic or sexual relationships with men to prove to yourself and other people that you're attracted to men.
- You know that lesbians exist but you think you can't possibly be one of them because if you were, you'd know already - **very common**.
- You think you're attracted to men but just don't want to date them.
- You don't like kissing/touching/having sex with your husband/boyfriend or you're not attracted to your husband/boyfriend but it must be because he's not the one for you (or another excuse).
- Most of your experiences with men are/were men being attracted to you, and you sort of going along with it.
- You only develop attraction to a guy after a female friend expresses attraction to them.
- You find yourself wishing you could just have one hot fling with a woman just to try it out, or fantasise about it.
- You think attraction is just "not being disgusted by a man".
- You enjoy consuming f/f erotica a lot more than any other type, and find fantasising about women a lot more satisfying than any other fantasy.

- You crave “platonic” physical contact with your female friends but wish that men would just leave you alone.
- You’re only attracted to men whose attention would somehow be profitable (i.e. men in positions of power such as your boss).
- Deciding who to be attracted to, or asking people who you should crush on.
- You try to pursue your feelings for other women through going on “platonic dates” with women and “practising on women”.
- You think you’re too young/busy to be attracted to men or have a fulfilling relationship with a man.
- “I would totally date [x woman] if they were a guy!! ! !!”
- You have abstract crushes that you don’t actually want to progress into romantic and/or sexual relationships - **very common**.
- You date men because it’s what you’re supposed to do, and stay with them because you can’t find a good reason to break up.
- You really want to be a lesbian and only date women but feel like you can’t because of some lingering, vague idea of attraction to men, but the idea of dating a man is distressing, gross, upsetting, boring, unsatisfying or makes you feel trapped.
- Being very specific with the men you’re “interested” in but having absolutely no type when it comes to girls because they’re all so beautiful.
- Your favourite character in every show is that one gay-coded or butch-looking woman (examples: Shego from Kim Possible, Spinelli from Recess, Starbuck from Battlestar Galactica).
- You wish your boyfriend/husband was more like a female friend.

- it seems like you have to force yourself to find guys attractive, have crushes on them, etc.
- you feel grossed out by/neutral towards heterosexual romance, but not romance between women
- you couldn't imagine yourself being in a very long-term relationship with/married to a man
- you feel like you could have a romantic relationship with a man but not a sexual relationship, or vice versa
- your attraction to men feels less real than your attraction to women, and it feels much more forced

## **Conclusion**

Women can have conflicting feelings for men in a multitude of ways due to misogyny and the patriarchy that oppresses us. You may be reading this and start to question yourself after relating to most of these and that's okay. If you are unsure or questioning, feel free to try on the lesbian label as well. If you come to the conclusion that you are not a lesbian eventually, that's okay too. These are the most common signs of compulsory heterosexuality. Plenty of lesbians still struggle with compulsory heterosexuality. There are other ways compulsory heterosexuality may manifest itself as well. You don't have to relate to all of these to identify as a lesbian. I'd like to assure you that even though you currently have a boyfriend, a husband, or had one in the past, that this does not make you any less of a lesbian. If you've had sex with men, you're not any less of a lesbian. You can still be a lesbian if you're a trans woman / nonbinary too, if you feel a connected to womanhood through your love of other women. Nonbinary and trans lesbians have always existed as well, such as Leslie Feinberg and her most famous book [\*Stone Butch Blues\*](#) that entices this. Plenty of lesbians feel alienated for being lesbians and are gender nonconforming or dysphoric. Lesbian is not a dirty word. Do not settle for men if you don't think you can ever be truly happy ending up with one. Being a lesbian is healing and loving women as a lesbian does not make you predatory in any way. I hope you can do some soul searching and figure out your consciousness.

## **Credit**

- <https://veganscully.tumblr.com/>
- <http://thatdiabolicalfeminist.tumblr.com/>
- <http://cyberlesbian.tumblr.com/>
- <https://closet-keys.tumblr.com>
- <http://positive-lesbian-vibes.tumblr.com/>
- <https://adviceforwlw.tumblr.com>
- <https://butch-kira.tumblr.com>



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