

# WHAT IS BIPHOBIA?



**Biphobia is based on the belief that everyone is only truly attracted to one sex or gender — that everyone is gay or straight. It leads to a number of assumptions:**

- Bisexual and pansexual (or bi+) people can't make up their minds.
- Bi+ people betray queer communities by dating straight folks.
- Bi+ people are greedy and can't have committed relationships.
- Bi+ people are going through a phase, and they'll grow out of it.

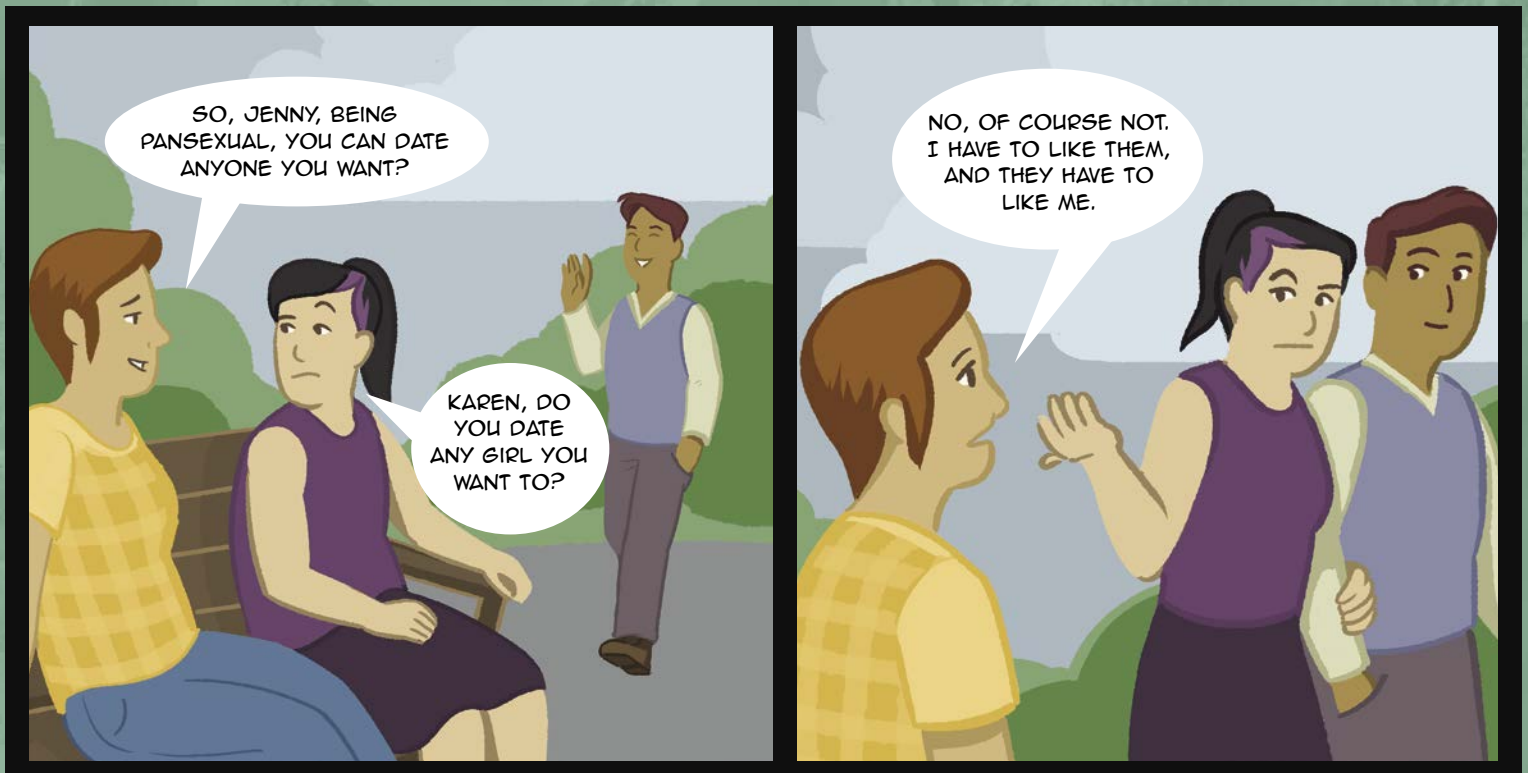
### **Have you considered?**

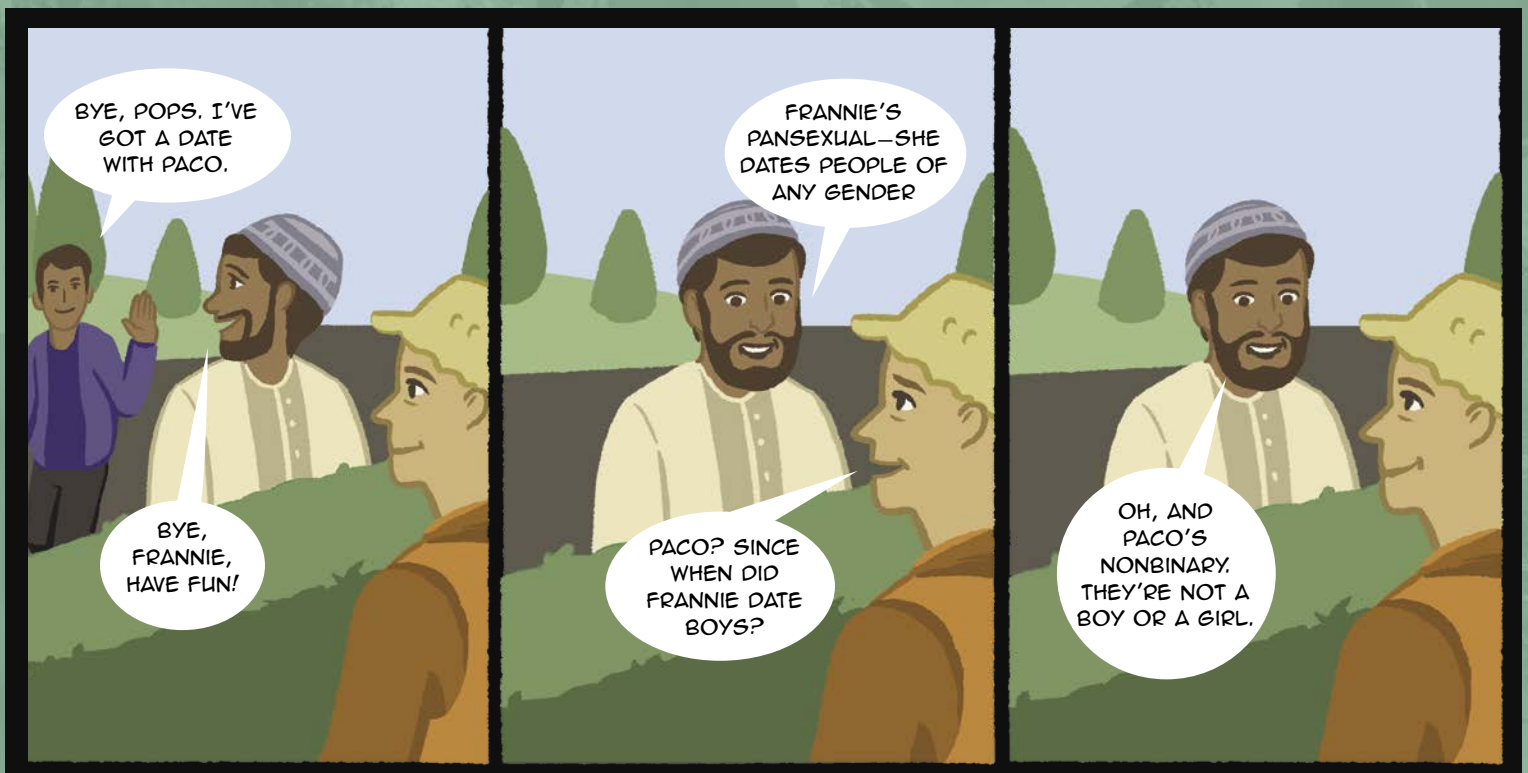
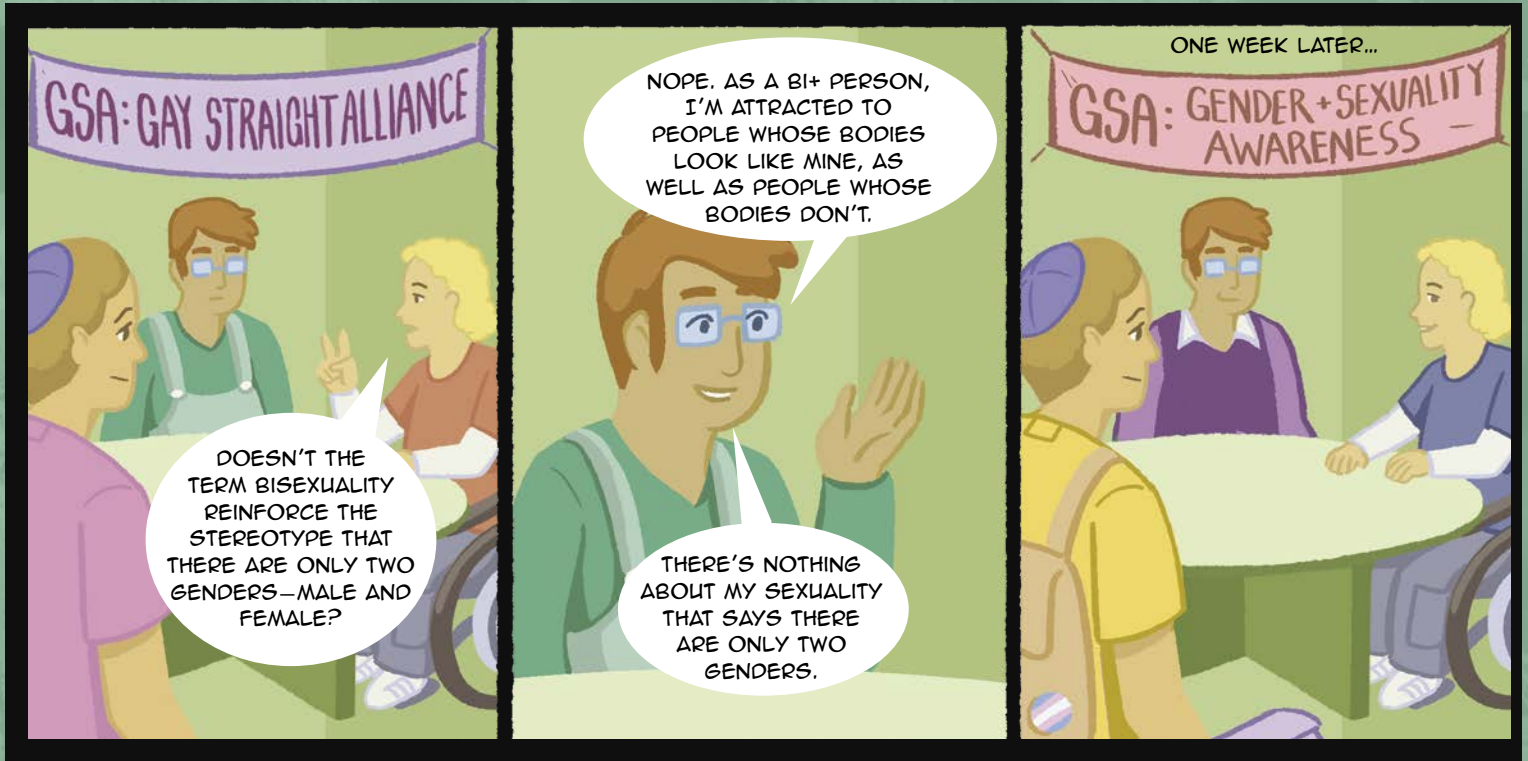
- Bi+ people have existed throughout history.
- Bi+ people know who they like.
- Sexual orientation doesn't determine whether people have one partner for life or even one partner at a time.
- Often, young people who come out as gay are also told, "It's a phase."

**The plus sign in bi+ or bisexual+ means that there are many ways of describing someone who is sexually, physically, or emotionally attracted to people of more than one sex or gender. Some terms under the bi+ umbrella are defined on page 15.**

**This book also uses the umbrella abbreviation 2SLGBTQ+. This stands for two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. Again, there is a plus sign to represent many identities not specifically shown here.**

# BIPHOBIA IS BASED ON CERTAIN KINDS OF THINKING...





## QUIZ: BIPHOBIC OR NOT?

Biphobia is based on the belief that individuals can only be attracted to others of one sex or gender. Bi+ people experience this bias from both gay and straight communities. Check the following and answer which are biphobic and which are not.

- 1. Vivek has identified as bisexual since sixth grade and has dated boys and girls. In ninth grade, he's been dating Adelaide for a while. So Vivek must be straight now.**

Yes, this is biphobic; people often assume that others' sexuality is determined by the gender of the person they are dating, living with, or married to.



- 2. Amaria has known she is lesbian since fifth grade, when she started having crushes on other girls. She's interested in a boy who likes her. She's afraid to tell her friends.**

Could be. Amaria may be experiencing *internalized biphobia*, possibly because she fears that straight, gay, and lesbian peers will judge her.



- 3. Kai searches the library computer for books on bisexuality+ but finds only general gay and lesbian ones that barely mention bi+ people.**

Possibly. It's definitely *bi erasure* (or *bi invisibility*), which contributes to biphobia. Books specifically on bisexuality+ for young people are not that common.



- 4. After Dina comes out as bisexual to a close friend, she is told, "I don't care what you do in private."**

Yes, it reinforces the stereotype that bi+ identities are purely sexual. Bi+ women and girls are often stereotyped as *easy* and are slut-shamed.



**5. Dina tells her grandmother she's bisexual. Grandma replies, "You're young. You might change your mind when you meet the right boy."**

Yes, it's biphobic and homophobic. It reinforces the idea that non-heterosexual identities are a phase.



**6. Clementine is chatting with her family over dinner about her health class, which discussed bisexuality+. Mom says, "We don't know any bisexual people."**

No, but it's highly unlikely Mom has *never* met a bisexual+ person. It's just as unlikely she shares her sexual identity with everyone she meets.



**7. At a GSA meeting, Fatima asks how they can better include bisexual+ people. A staff advisor says the group already uses the abbreviation 2SLGBTQ+.**

Maybe. Inclusion is more than a single letter in the 2SLGBTQ+ umbrella. Bi+, two-spirit, trans, and nonbinary identities are often underrepresented.



**8. The 2SLGBTQ+ club was turned down when it asked to make an announcement for Bi+ Visibility Day, September 23. The principal feels a Pride assembly in June is "sufficient." "We don't want to overdo it."**

Yes, and then some. All members of 2SLGBTQ+ communities should receive recognition. It also helps straight/cisgender people understand 2SLGBTQ+ diversity.



**9. People are always asking Jenna how bisexual she is. Does she like guys and girls equally?**

Yes, it's often biphobic because it presents bi+ people as somewhere between homosexuality and heterosexuality. It also erases nonbinary people.



**10. Sky is doing a media studies project on bisexuality+ and is disappointed to find few bi+ TV and film characters. When they do, it's a supporting character.**

It's bi erasure. Even if unintentional, it's still biphobic. Female bi+ characters are often the target of crude remarks and harassment from male characters, passed off as humour. There's very little diversity of bi+ characters, who are typically white, cisgender people.



# DEAR CONFLICT COUNSELLOR



**Q: Katie and I have been best friends since kindergarten. We played with dolls, did each other's hair, and dressed up in my older sister's clothes. We started getting interested in boys during the fifth grade and dated a bit in middle school. Now she tells me she thinks she's bisexual. Is it wrong that I'm uncomfortable?**

**A:** Sounds like you and Katie have been good friends. Think about why this information is making you uncomfortable. Are you worried she's attracted to you, and you don't feel the same way? It's not biphobic if you're not attracted to her. It's also natural to want to protect a close friendship. Lots of friendships change or end because one person has romantic feelings and the other doesn't. Or people's interests and other relationships change. On the other hand, it may be that Katie trusts you to share her dating experiences with you. She may be looking for an ally as she explores this part of herself.

**Q: I've been on dates with girls but not boys, but I'm really curious about dating boys. And I'm not sexually active. Is it still okay to call myself bisexual+?**

A: Your sexual identity has nothing to do with sexual experience. You get to choose the term that feels right for you.



**Q: I'm lesbian. I've been on a few dates with girls. I've been thinking of asking out a pansexual girl. I mentioned it to some of my gay friends, who say I shouldn't go out with her. Why would they say that? I don't know what to do.**

A: If your friends tell you not to date her simply because she's pansexual, they're not thinking about you, only about what makes them comfortable. Your identity and choices belong to you. You could ask them to explain specifically why they don't want you to go out with her. There's a good chance they don't really have much understanding of bi+ identities. It's up to them to educate themselves. You have the choice to help them if you're willing.

**Q: Is two-spirit the same as bisexual+?**

A: The short answer is no, but this is a really interesting question! Two-spirit is a term used by some Indigenous people to describe their sexual and/or gender identity. It's deeply entwined with their spiritual identity. The two-spirit umbrella includes Indigenous teachings from across Turtle Island (North America).

Many First Nations believed a person's gender was determined by their spirit, not their physical body. These beliefs were violently suppressed by colonizers. Forced attendance at residential schools was the first time Indigenous children were separated by age or binary gender.

Only Indigenous people can claim a two-spirit path, but some may also choose to use more contemporary terms like bisexual+, queer, gay, or a blend of terms like Indigiqueer. Two-spirit people confront discrimination and erasure, just like bi+ people.