

What does dating trans women mean for my sexuality?



This tip sheet is for men who date trans women or trans feminine people and are experiencing shame or confusion about who they are and their sexuality.*

Summary

- Many men are attracted to trans women. Some men like different types of women, including trans women. Some men only like trans women.
- Some guys feel ashamed or confused about liking trans women, and worry about what other people will think.
- If you are in a healthy and loving relationship it doesn't matter what other people think.
- Some trans women say men who feel shame treat them badly. Shame can get in the way of good relationships and can hurt trans women.

* "Men" in this resource refers to cisgender men. "Trans women" refers to trans women, trans feminine people, women who have a trans and gender diverse history or experience, but do not identify as transgender - and other trans feminine culturally-specific identities such as Sistergirls, Fa'afafine and Kinner.

Exploring your sexuality is a healthy part of adult development. However, if being attracted to or hooking up with trans women is new to you, you may be wondering what this means for your sexuality.

You may feel ashamed of your attraction, be questioning if you are gay or bisexual, or be worried how other people might perceive you.

“My sexuality developed during my teenage years and I just kind of found that there’s a big place in my heart for trans women.” James

Many men are attracted to or date trans women. Some men are attracted to:

- A range of women, including trans women
- Exclusively trans women
- Femininity or feminine qualities
- A range of different gender identities
- People of all genders.

Some men are happy to identify with particular labels, such as straight, queer, bisexual or pansexual. For other men those labels don’t fit or aren’t important to them. How you identify or who you are attracted to can also change over time.

“I can’t explain why I have an attraction to transgender people, but I do. Does it make me gay, does it make me straight, or does it even matter? For me, I settled on it doesn’t really matter. What matters is that I’m happy and I’m with someone that I like being with.” Rob

When deciding if a label is right for you, it’s important to remember that trans women’s experiences and identities are valid and should be respected and celebrated.

“Sleeping with or dating trans women doesn’t make you gay. We are not men. It’s so disrespectful when guys project their own fear and shame onto me, because they are freaking out about their sexuality and stigma in society.” Electra

Feeling comfortable with yourself and your sexuality helps create a good foundation for enjoyable relationships.

For men experiencing shame, this can lead to:

- Feelings of regret or guilt
- Anxiety or panic
- Pulling away or becoming distant
- Sabotaging an otherwise good relationship or experience
- Feelings of resentment or aggression towards trans women.

“The first few times after sex I thought, ‘oh why did I do that, I’m a straight guy’. I was regretful but then of course I wanted to see her again. I can’t remember if I was nervous or not, but it was something new for me.”

Patrick



The only person who can define your sexuality is you. What’s important is that you are comfortable with yourself and that you treat your partners with respect.

It's ok if you're having feelings of shame or confusion. These feelings are common because of widespread discrimination and myths that harm both trans women and the men they date. What's important is that you get support and that you don't let these feelings hurt your partner or yourself.

“In their spiral of shame, often after sex, men can sometimes be mean or rude, and it's really hurtful. I deserve better. I deserve to be treated with respect.” Electra

Trans women talk about the harmful or hurtful behaviours of some men who feel insecure about their attractions and desires. They report that although this is particularly common after sex, it can happen at any time. This might look like:

- Leaving abruptly or ghosting
- Blaming trans women for your desires or actions
- Making derogatory comments or being rude
- Being angry or aggressive
- Using violence, including physical, verbal or sexual violence.

Tips: Here are some ways you can look after trans women and yourself:

- Acknowledge how you are feeling and be kind to yourself
- Remember that your feelings may impact on your partner/s
- Ask your date if it is ok to talk about your feelings
- Seek professional support
- Talk to someone you trust who will be supportive
- Read resources like transfemme.com.au

If you're looking for support in Australia:

Qlife

National anonymous and confidential LGBTIQ+ peer support service (including partners)

Website: qlife.org.au

Phone: **1800 184 527**

Opening hours: 3PM to midnight, every day
Telephone and web chat support service

Say It Out Loud

ACON's sexual, domestic and family violence website *Say It Out Loud* provides information and guidance relating to sexual, family and intimate partner violence in the Australian LGBTIQ+ community.

Website: sayitoutloud.org.au

Men's Referral Service

A free, confidential telephone service for men

Phone: **1300 766 491**

Open any time.

For men outside Australia looking for counselling support, try searching online for “trans friendly counselling in my local area”.