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For 40 years I thought I was straight but now I fancy a woman – am I actually gay?

COUPLES THERAPY

In this week's Couple Therapy dilemma, counsellor and therapist Cate Mackenzie advises on confusion about sexuality



'My relationships with men were not very healthy. Is this just a reaction to that?' (Photo: antonio arcos aka fotonstudio ph/Getty)



By **i Team**

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Each week **i** asks experts to answer readers' questions about love, sex and relationships

I'm a 40-year-old woman who has only ever had relationships with men, but this weekend I went to [Brighton Pride](#) with a friend and met a woman. The chemistry between us was strong.

We swapped numbers and have been texting but I'm scared of taking it forward because I've never done this before. What if I don't know what to do if we are physical? Or what if when we get to that point and I feel turned off?



Also, I don't know how I feel about being gay or bisexual – does that mean that everything until now has been a mistake? I've been married once before and my relationships with men were not very healthy. Is this just a reaction to that? Or is it who I really am?

Couples counsellor and psychosexual therapist **Cate Mackenzie** says

First of all, well done you! This is really exciting and it's lovely that you are open to this attraction. I hear your confusion and want to reassure you. While some can easily describe ourselves as gay, straight or bisexual, many of us experience sexuality in a more fluid way.

The Kinsey scale describes a person's sexuality as a spectrum, with pure heterosexuality on one end and pure gay on another. Most of us are in between, leaning to bisexuality or bi-curious or having a preference for one side but an openness to all. I like the term pansexual to describe the array of options that are now available to us. There is a great galaxy of sexual orientation and gender that we are all opening up to in ourselves and others.

It often happens that people allow different parts of their sexual self to emerge later when they have the resources and confidence to take the emotional risk of trying something new, and not worrying so much about what people think.

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You might want to look up some female erotica and lesbian stories to get a sense of other people's experiences. This is a wonderful opportunity to explore new parts of yourself. Do you know what turns you on or what your most erotic experiences have been?

People may feel ashamed, and ignore or not take notice of the most erotic experiences in their life – which may have been, for example, with a same-sex friend when there was a kiss or lingering look. It could be that your milieu was quite homophobic growing up, and so you buried this attraction.

There are women who have decided to try being with a woman because they “gave up” on men but this situation sounds like something has come alive in you and you are nervous and wish to explore it. As for having to define yourself as gay or bi – you don't have to do this at all. You are simply a person allowing yourself to get to know another person.

My suggestion for your connection with this woman would be to be authentic about who you are. Share how you are feeling (in the right time and right moment).

Intimacy and sensuality and sexuality are about connecting, discovery, finding out what kind of connection you like – how you like to kiss, touch and be touched and what kind of lover you want or wish to be. This is a multifaceted journey and do remember the other person also does not know what you might want too, so take it gently, have fun, focus on getting to know each other rather than worrying about how you might perform or what you need to do.



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