

# AROMANTICISM 101

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## WHAT IS AROMANTICISM?

Aromanticism is the experience of not experiencing romantic attraction. People who are aromantic, often abbreviated to aro, have varied experiences in their lives and don't all understand and experience their aromanticism in the same way.

## WHAT IS ROMANTIC ATTRACTION?

Honestly, I have no clue. But here's a description an alloromantic, someone who experiences romantic attraction and isn't on the aromantic spectrum, friend gave:

- "If you've experienced any of the following symptoms with someone:
- You randomly think about them or get a text from them and it suddenly lights up your face, no matter how crappy your day has been going to that point.
- You find yourself constantly talking about them and how funny they are or how smart they are or this cute thing they did or whatever, to the point that your friends are all gagging.
- Despite this, you get butterflies in your stomach / nervousness / jitters at the thought of talking to them about your feelings (note: make sure this is not actually a panic attack).

...you MIGHT be experiencing romantic attraction."

These sensations can parallel those felt by an aro person in an intimate relationship or with desires for intimacy or aromantic, asexual, and non-hierarchical commitment.

## WHAT IS RELATIONSHIP ANARCHY?

Relationship anarchy is an approach to relationships that's built from anarchist principles. Anarchy is committed to breaking down harmful hierarchies. Relationship anarchy works to oppose hierarchies in and between relationships and relationship types. This means an opposition to patriarchy\*, heteronormativity\*, amatonormativity and more. Relationship anarchists try to build relationships while rejecting notions of what their relationships 'should' be. As such, while not all aromantic people are relationship anarchists and not all relationship anarchists are aromantic, there is a close connection between aromanticism and relationship anarchy.

***Patriarchy:*** A social system where men hold power and predominate systems of leadership.

***Heteronormativity:*** The assumption that heterosexuality and strict binary gender roles are normal and good for all people.

## ARE ALL AROMANTIC PEOPLE ASEXUAL AND ARE ALL ASEXUAL PEOPLE AROMANTIC?

Nope! Some people are aromantic but not asexual and some people are asexual but not aromantic. Others are both aromantic and asexual. However, asexual and aromantic identities do share a history and have overlapping communities so it's common to see both of them talked about in the same space.

## WHAT IS AMATONORMATIVITY?

Amatonormativity was coined in 2012 by Elizabeth Brake in *Minimizing Marriage*. It's defined as

“The assumption that a central, exclusive, amorous relationship is normal for humans, in that it is a universally shared goal, and that such a relationship is normative, in that it should be aimed at in preference to other relationship types.”

Living in an amatonormative society impacts all people, but its impacts often hit quite close to home for aromantic people. Aromantic people often don't want to form romantic relationships and find that the relationships they do want to form are devalued. Aromantic people can also feel othered because they don't share what is so often presented as a universal goal. Many aromantic people work to reject amatonormativity in their own lives and in broader society.

## IS AROMANTICISM A SPECTRUM?

Aromantic is a big spectrum with lots of different experiences and identities under it. Here are some more common aromantic spectrum identities and there are many more and new ones emerging every day.

**Grayromantic:** describes someone who doesn't 100% fit the definition of aromantic but still closely resonates with many aromantic experiences. This may be someone who experiences romantic attraction rarely or has attraction that blurs between romantic and platonic or countless other possibilities.

**Quoiromantic/ WTFromantic:** describes people who don't understand romantic orientation or don't feel it applies. Also used by people who don't see a distinction between platonic and romantic attraction.

**Demiromantic:** describes people who only feel romantic attraction to someone they have established a close emotional connection with.

**Lithromantic/ Akoioromantic:** describes someone who experiences romantic attraction but doesn't want it to be reciprocated. Their attraction made fade once it's reciprocated.

**Cupioromantic:** describes someone not romantically attracted to anyone, but desiring to form a romantic relationship.

## DO AROMANTIC PEOPLE EXPERIENCE ATTRACTION?

Some do, some don't. There are countless ways to experience attraction and aromantic experiences are all over the place. Here are some types of attraction that aros may or may not experience.

<b>Sexual</b>	A feeling of attraction to someone's physical appearance with a sexual component, or desire to touch someone sexually.
<b>Sensual</b>	Attraction that involves a desire to touch or be physically close to someone, but not necessarily in a sexual way.
<b>Platonic</b>	Desire for friendship or another close non-romantic relationship with someone. The platonic version of a crush is called a squish.
<b>Alterous</b>	Attraction that isn't platonic or romantic but falls in the space between these two types of attraction.
<b>Aesthetic</b>	An interest or desire to look at someone and appreciate their appearance, but which isn't necessarily sexual or romantic.

Attraction, just like all human experiences, is strange, blurry, messy and widely varied. Don't expect that all experiences will neatly fit into these categories or that these definitions are sufficient for all people.

Also, attraction isn't needed to form a relationship. For example, many people build platonic relationships without feeling platonic attraction or having squishes.

## DO AROMANTIC PEOPLE HAVE RELATIONSHIPS?

Some do, some don't. Some aros are in romantic relationships, some are in platonic relationships, some are in sexual relationships, some are in all of these, some are in other relationships and some are in none. Aro experiences are widely varied! Having said that, there are some relationship types and styles that are close to the aromantic community.

**Nonamory:** A lifestyle choice or relationship style that does not include intimate, long-term partnerships, whether romantic or platonic.

**QPR (Queer/quasiplatonic relationship):** A non-romantic relationship that rejects the common limits placed on platonic relationships in terms of their value and commitment.



## DO AROMANTIC PEOPLE FEEL LOVE?

Some do, some don't. Really you have to ask yourself what love is. Some aromantic people feel platonic love for their friends and partners. Some feel familial love for their family. Some feel other kinds of love for the people in their lives. Some aromantics don't feel that 'love' describes how they feel for the people in their lives. Some aromantics don't feel love and don't have close relationships.