

Can Women Love Women?

Men, with or without degrees in psychology, have wanted to believe that women become lesbians, or have lesbian relationships, for reasons that have to do with men. They were rejected or loved too much by their fathers. They were unsuccessful with male lovers or with male society at large.

Conversely, men often reveal their egocentricity by insisting that a woman can be "converted" from lesbianism with ease—all she needs is a good man.

Women are also seen as charming children not to be taken seriously. This is an attitude that pervades many areas of life, including discussions about homosexuality. There are, for instance, many more books on male than on female homosexuality, a fact for which women might be grateful since interpretations of male homosexuality have often been inaccurate and prejudiced. But the truth is that women who love women have not been taken seriously enough to be studied by the scientific world. If women are not themselves considered serious human beings, capable of making life choices, how can one woman's love for another be seen as serious, or as a matter of choice?

The current feminist fight against socially imposed sex roles has helped to present new options, not only by discarding old notions of what should be considered "natural," but by offering a definition of relationships based only on human qualities and capabilities. A woman is thus left free to like or dislike, to love or not love, another person as she herself may choose.

The following interview is excerpted from *Notes From the Third Year: Women's Liberation*. The woman speaking was questioned about her love relationship with another woman. Both are feminists. Both had previously had only heterosexual relationships.—Ed.

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Question. You said you had been friends for a while before you realized you were attracted to each other. How did you become aware of it?

Answer. I wasn't conscious of it until one evening when we were together and it all just exploded. But, looking back, there are always signs, only one represses them.

For example, I remember that one evening—we are in the same feminist group—we were all talking very abstractly about love. All of a sudden even though the group was carrying on the conversation in a theoretical way, we were having a personal conversation. We were starting to tell each other that we liked each other. Of course one of the things we discussed was: What is the thin line between friendship and love?

Or, there were times when we were very aware of having "accidentally" touched each other. And Jennie told me later that when we first met she remembered thinking, "abstractly" again, that if she were ever to get involved with a woman, she'd like to get involved with someone like me.

The mind-blowing thing is that you aren't at all conscious of what you are feeling; rather, you subconsciously and systematically refuse to deal with the implications of what's coming out. You just let it hang there because you're too scared to let it continue and see what it means.

Q. What did you do when you became aware of your mutual attraction?

A. We'd been seeing a lot of each other, and I was at her house for dinner. During the evening—we were having a nice time, but I also remember feeling uncomfortable—I became very aware of her as we were sitting together looking at something. There was an unusual kind of tension throughout the whole evening.

It was quite late by the time we broke up, so she asked me whether I wanted to stay and sleep on her couch. And I remember really being very up-tight—something I certainly wouldn't have felt in any other situation with a friend. Yet, even when I felt that by staying I would get myself into something, I wasn't quite sure what—something new and dangerous—I decided to stay anyway.

It wasn't really until I tried to fall asleep, and couldn't, that all of a sud-

den I became very, very aware. I was flooded with a tremendous attraction for her. And I wanted to tell her I wanted to sleep with her, I wanted to let her know what I was feeling. At the same time I was totally bewildered, because here I was—not only did I want to tell her, but I was having a hard time just facing up to what was coming out in myself. My mind was working overtime trying to deal with this new thing.

She was awake too, and so we sat and talked. It took me about two hours to build up the courage to even bring up the subject. I think it is probably one of the most difficult things I ever had to do—to say anything was just so hard.

When I did bring it up in an oblique way and told her that I was attracted to her, she replied somewhat generally that she felt the same way. You see, she was as scared as I was, but I didn't know it. I thought she seemed very cool, so I wasn't even sure if she was interested. Although I think subconsciously I knew, because otherwise I wouldn't have asked her—I think I would have been too scared of rejection.

But when I finally did bring it up, and she said she felt the same way, well, at that point there was really no space left for anything else in my mind. So we agreed to just drop it and let things happen as they would at a later time. My main, immediate worry was that maybe I had blown a good friendship which I really valued. Also, even if she did feel the same way, would we know what to do with it?

Q. When you first realized that you were possibly getting involved with a woman, were you afraid or upset?

A. No. The strange thing is that the next morning, after I left, I felt a fantastic high. I was bouncing down the street and the sun was shining and I felt tremendously good. My mind was on a super high.

When I got home I couldn't do any kind of work. My mind kept operating on emergency speed, trying to deal with my new feelings for her. So I sat down and wrote a letter to myself. I just wrote it free association—didn't try to work it out in any kind of theory—and as I was writing I was learning from myself what I was feeling. Unexpectedly, I wasn't feeling guilty or worried. I felt great.