

10/2014

Israeli Asexual Forum

Hello Julie Sondra Decker,

Thanks for your time answering our questions for our Asexual Awareness Week.

Here are the questions we were thinking about and if there's a question you don't feel comfortable with, you can skip it, we understand of course:

1. When did you realize asexuality needs to be published and explained to the public?

I first wrote about asexuality in 1998, on my own website, and my thoughts mostly covered my own asexual experience. When I started receiving mail about it from others who felt similarly, I knew there was a need for this material.

2. We know there's a lot of work to be done, but based on people's responses you get all the time, do you think global public awareness for asexuality became better in the recent years?

Yes! Particularly in the last two and a half years. I used to have to explain what asexuality was to everyone I mentioned it to, but now more than half the time when I say I'm asexual, the person I'm talking to has heard of it before or knows someone who's asexual.

3. Do you feel comfortable with your personal exposure?

Most of the time. I don't like getting misrepresented by journalists—that happens frequently—and I especially don't like responses from people who

are saying the same condescending and erasing things that I've debunked in the piece they're reading, but for the most part I'm comfortable.

4. Why do you think people around us feel so comfortable asking for our sex life while we just identified as asexual, and how do you think we should deal with it?

Perhaps they're used to an everyday existence that allows them to freely express their sexual identity, and when they don't understand ours, they feel entitled to press us with questions about how to relate to it. They may lack the context and empathy to understand why the questions might feel invasive or unwelcome. My advice to asexual people who aren't willing to entertain questions of this nature is to tell the person either answer in the general instead of the personal (e.g., answer "Do you masturbate?" with "some asexual people do, and some don't"), or just say you're not comfortable answering the questions and give them a resource video, an article, or a book to help them with their questions.

5. Few years ago the academic world started searching, exploring and publishing essays related to asexuality, what do you think about the donation of such essays and the academy generally?

I think it helps certain types of people accept asexuality as legitimate if academics, professionals, scientists, and "experts" have studied us, but it isn't NECESSARY to receive this attention and exploration before we can be respected. The default should be respecting us and listening to our experience, regardless of whether "science" has accepted asexuality. But in general, I think academia and science professionals SHOULD be studying all aspects of sexuality, and asexuality is one of the groups they hadn't given much attention to before. If scientists or learned professionals ignore us and leave us out of their understanding of the world, the studies they do

and research they undertake will always leave us out and fail to describe us or include us. We SHOULD be acknowledged as part of the world, so our existence should be reflected in studies on us.

6. What do you think should be done more for asexual publicity, is the current way should continue or we all should think of new ways?

As communication evolves, we should evolve with it. I think we need to focus on both supporting other asexual people and communicating with non-asexual people, and I think we're going in the right directions for this. We have good channels for asexual support, and one way we can improve that is to be more inclusive within our organizations—specifically with regard to gender identity, race, ability, orientation, illness, nationality, and age—so that no one demographic continues to be the “face” of the movement. And when it comes to communicating with the outside world, I think our awareness weeks are good but there should always be efforts made to push for inclusion in any and all opportunities to discuss sexual diversity. We must continue to create content in visual, audio, and print media by making it ourselves and connecting with mainstream media outlets, and we must also move into more nuanced discussion—as things are now, most pieces on asexuality are introductory and not very inclusive or complicated, and we need higher-level discussions of these topics. That will need to be led by asexual people.

On behalf of the Israeli Asexual Forum, I would like to thank you for your answers.

You're welcome!