

I'M MUSLIM

AND

I MIGHT NOT

BE STRAIGHT

A Resource for LGBTQ+ Muslim Youth



a project of
Advocates for Youth

“I Am Muslim And I Might Not Be Straight; A Resource For Lgbtq+ Muslim Youth”

“Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds, the Compassionate, the Merciful” (1.2-3)

I think I might not be straight...

Questioning your sexuality can be difficult to navigate as a young Muslim. This resource is for young Muslims who want support around their various complicated identities, from religion to sexual orientation and gender identity. We hope that this publication is a resource for you to better understand issues around sexuality, religion, sexual health and consent.

“As a 20 year old queer, nonbinary, hijabi Muslim - my identity is complex. My parents often say that there aren’t any LGBTQ people in our community. My mosque often says that you cannot be LGBTQ and a Muslim. The government often says that me and my family aren’t welcome in this country in the first place. What I’ve come to understand is that queer Muslims have existed since the beginning of Islam. We exist. And Allah made us just the way we are.”

- Fatimah, 20



Image Description: Nonbinary Muslim sits in peaceful position as the words “My queerness is my own, and I may share it with whomever I desire” circulate around their head.

Finding the right words...

Words can be powerful and can help you find a community. However, sometimes it's difficult to know what to say. For Muslims whose families come from other countries (remember: 33% of American Muslims are African American and have been here for a long time!) sometimes the languages we use don't have words for this. My uncle tells me that it's because only western people are queer. That is not true! Here are some words to describe sexual orientations or gender identities: Shath or Mithli in Arabic, Qanis/Qanisad in Somali and Hamjensgaran in Persian. A variety of Muslim cultures have language to describe sexuality that is thousands of years old.

Many Muslims today are working towards creating or carving out a language for themselves that looks to the future and new words. They reject the idea that same sex relations and gender non-conformity are only for people from the West. Some other Muslims feel comfortable claiming English words.

You might have heard of a variety of labels for sexual orientation and gender identity, such as queer, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender non-conforming, non-binary, asexual, same gender loving, and so on. Don't feel pressured to use them if you don't want to. Just remember that sexual orientation and gender identity can be fluid, and you don't have to choose a label and stick to it. Understanding your sexuality and gender identity is a process for most people. Regardless of what language you use, how you define yourself is up to you.



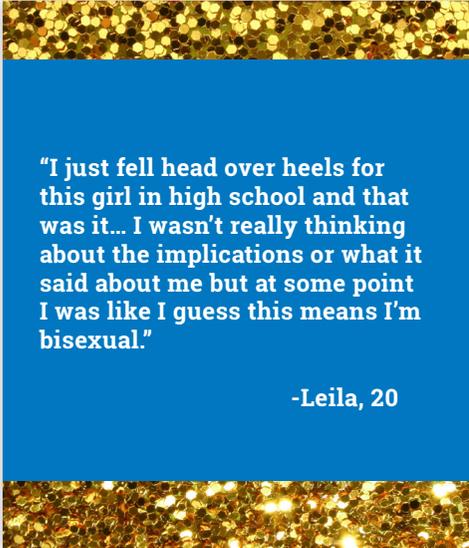
How Do I know I am Queer?



Image Description: A young person, with a thoughtful look on their face, reads an article on their phone titled "10 Signs That You Might Be Gay!"

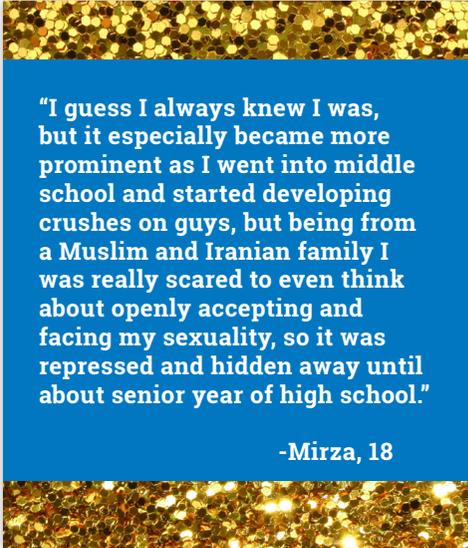
"I didn't have one moment when I realized I was attracted to women. I think it came to me gradually and I didn't really have the words for it at first. I struggled for a while looking for language because I wanted something rooted in Arab culture but these days I use the label of lesbian or Queer."

-Mina, 22



"I just fell head over heels for this girl in high school and that was it... I wasn't really thinking about the implications or what it said about me but at some point I was like I guess this means I'm bisexual."

-Leila, 20



"I guess I always knew I was, but it especially became more prominent as I went into middle school and started developing crushes on guys, but being from a Muslim and Iranian family I was really scared to even think about openly accepting and facing my sexuality, so it was repressed and hidden away until about senior year of high school."

-Mirza, 18

There is no one way of knowing that you are not straight or gender non-conforming. Some people know from a very young age and some people don't know until much later in life. During adolescence, many people can feel very confused about their attraction. Some people find their teenage years particularly isolating and lonely. If you feel this way, just know that there are plenty of other young people like you and people who have been through the same mixed emotions. You may find yourself wondering, "Are there no other Muslims like me?" The truth is there are millions of queer and trans people across the globe and a lot of them are Muslim.

Can I Still be Muslim if I am Queer? (Am I Haraam?)

Of course you can still be Muslim if you are Queer. Many of us are both!
You are definitely not haraam.

"Being queer and being Muslim are not mutually exclusive, you don't have to give up one to be the other, you can easily and proudly be both."

-Mirza, 18

"The only person you have to deal with at the end of day is Allah. Don't listen to the communities around you. Allah defies gender - why can't you?"

-Dalia, 19

"I refuse to give up any part of myself. I am both, queer and Muslim. And the notion that I have to give up one to be the other is not something I'm interested in doing. At least not anymore. It has been a long journey, but I finally learned to bask in the wholeness of being unapologetically myself. Islam is my past, it's my history, it's my culture. It's every bit a part of me as my queerness is. I am both. I am whole. And I refuse to be fractured."

-Mais 26

At the end of the day remember that Allah made all of their creations with beauty and love in mind. Being queer does not make you any less Muslim or any less religious. You do not have to choose between your religion and your sexuality and gender. You can be queer and still be whatever type of Muslim you want to be. Allah made humans with a wide array of genders and sexualities, and they know their creations best. Queer Muslims are not a tragic story. We are real, valid and exist in mosques and communities everywhere. If you ever feel conflicted or challenged by either your faith or community remember this verse from the Quran:

“He Who created the seven heavens one above another: no want of proportion wilt thou see in the Creation of the Most Gracious. So turn thy vision again: seest thou any flaw?” (al-Mulk 67:3 - 4)

Always remember Allah has Ninety Nine names and one of them is the most merciful. Allah is Al Rahman...Al Raheem.

Check out the #MuslimAnd hashtag on social media and I Am Not Haraam on tumblr for more affirmation and access to posts written by and for queer Muslims: iamnotharaam.tumblr.com



Image Description: A young queer Muslim with glasses in a loving embrace with their parents on either side. A hijabi woman kisses them on the cheek and a bearded man rests his head on theirs.

“What is like to be a Queer Muslim?”



Image Description:
Two hijabi Muslims sit together and hold hands.

“I sometimes felt like I wasn’t queer enough for society...I wondered if I would be more acceptable to people as a queer hijabi if they knew I had short hair and if I rejected any identity that would associate me with my Arabness or Muslimness? But I learned to be unapologetic about my Muslimness in queer spaces, forcing people to realize that queer Muslims exist.”

-Mina, 22

““Being a Queer Muslim means that you can feel completely visible and invisible, struggling to navigate and perform queerness and Muslimness and if I’m being honest it can be hard. But I have also found people who love me and support me and you will too.”

-Saadia, 28

“Queerness isn’t necessarily a formative part of my identity. I don’t think of it as the same way I think of being Black or even being Muslim. It is something that is an addendum, so I think of myself as a being with all these things and one of these things is that I am attracted to women.”

-Halima, 21

There's no right way or wrong way to be queer, just like there is not one way of being Muslim. A lot of us have very particular ideas of what it means "to look queer" - but really, you look queer if you are queer!

"I wear a hijab, and often people think that means I am conservative. Not only do people assume that I am not sexual at all, they also never assume that I have a queer sexuality." - Adeelah, 22

This means you can have long hair, short hair, no hair, and/or be a hijabi and be queer. You don't have to be in a relationship or have sex to be queer. You don't need to prove yourself to anyone. Queer Muslims are everywhere in the world and our lives are complex, complicated and different. There is no one shared experience. Coming to terms with your queerness doesn't mean you have to be any less Muslim or religious.

Remember: your sexual orientation and gender identity are only one part of who you are. You are a complex human being with a multitude of identities, aesthetics and interests.



Image Description: A Niqabi Muslim holds hands with a nonbinary Muslim using a wheelchair

Consent and Emotional Readiness

As Muslims, many of us often hear a lot of contradictory and scary things about our sexual desires and bodies. It is very important to approach sex by thinking about your body and self with love and care. Working through and unlearning shame can be a difficult process and communicating with your partner and affirming yourself is an important part of it. The Prophet PBUH encouraged Muslims to engage in open conversations about sex and desire.

Just remember that your body is here to support you and it's important for you to learn how to support it. You should be aware of your body's limitations, desires and needs before engaging in sex. Be gentle with your body and soul - it's a prophetic tradition. Take time to process your emotions before and after engaging with partners. Focus on being in touch with your desires and boundaries.

Sex is something that is healthy and natural when practiced safely and consensually. Consent means communicating honestly with your partner about what you want and don't want to do. It's also about asking what they do or don't want. Consent is all about clear communication--setting boundaries and respecting the boundaries of others. Consent is continuous - you have to keep checking in with your partner/s because people have the right to change their minds!

Not everyone wants to have sex! Many Muslims wait until marriage to have sex, some Muslims are asexual, and some Muslims don't want to be in relationships. Neither choice should be a source of embarrassment or shame. But many Muslims regardless of their sexuality and gender identity are engaging in sex, whether it is premarital or not, and it's important that if you are, you practice safer sex.

Check out this website to learn more about [safer sex and contraception](#).



Who should I talk to? Do I have to “come out”?

“I think coming out is a very western concept... people often make you feel like your identities aren't valid if you don't come out. There are a lot of people who can't come out and it's not right for them. There are so many things you have to consider...you need to put yourself and safety first.”

-Dalia, 19

“When queerness does not follow or rejects the western queer narrative of “coming out”, acceptance and assimilation, it is not read as queer. But the truth is i feel queer therefore I am queer and I don't need to prove it to anyone.”

-Lama, 24

“I personally don't think I will ever come out to my parents. I don't think that means I am missing out on anything, not liberated or that I am living a lie. I think the idea of being “closeted” can be a way of shaming people who come from non-white western backgrounds. I think it is great that some people want and can come out to their parents but there is no one trajectory for queer people and it doesn't have to include coming out.”

-Farah, 20

Coming out isn't for everyone! Some LGBTQ people choose to come out, and some don't. Liberation and feeling comfortable with yourself looks different for everyone. There are a variety of reasons that people may not want to come out, from not feeling safe, to not seeing your sexuality as something that needs to be shared. You don't have to tell anyone about your sexuality to be yourself and live your life authentically.

Where can I find other Queer Muslims?

There are many places to find Queer Muslims. Chances are some of us live in your community, attend your school or worship at your Mosque. Many of us find it helpful to be in community with others who identify as both Queer and Muslim. Here are some organizations you can contact to find a network of Queer Muslims just like us.

LGBT+ Muslim Organizations

[Muslim Alliance for Sexual and Gender Diversity](#) (USA)

[Imaan](#) UK

[Salaam](#) Canada

[Safra Project](#) (UK)

[El-Tawhid Juma Circle](#) (Can join jummah via video)

[Secret Gardens](#) (Netherlands)

[The Inner Circle](#) (South Africa)

[CALEM](#) (France based but for all of Europe)

[H2M](#) (France)

[LGBT Muslim Retreat](#) (International)

[DESI LGBTQ HELPLINE FOR SOUTH ASIANS](#)

[Queer Muslims of Boston](#)

[Masjid Al-Rabia](#) (Chicago)

[OUTMuslim, Haven: The Inclusive Muslim Union of Philadelphia](#) (Pennsylvania)

[Seattle's Queer Muslim Collective](#)

[Queer Crescent Healing](#) (Bay Area, CA)

[Islamic Healing Space of A2 & Ypsi](#) (Michigan)

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