

communication is key to marriage with bisexual partner

by kate gaul

If homosexuality isn't very well understood, bisexuality is off somewhere in a nebulous left field. Bisexuals don't have a coherent liberation front and both sides of the sexual coin tend to shun them.

Homosexuals tend to think that bisexuals deny their true sexual identity—that they refuse to admit their gayness. Heterosexuals tend to think that bisexuals have an obscured sexual identity—that they waver uncertainly between being gay and straight. And, sometimes, bisexuals are lumped with that crowd of wife-swappers and all-night partiers, "the swingers."

Being bisexual is something like being a mulatto child; neither group really claims you.

David is a bisexual man, who, four years ago, married a heterosexual woman. Four years ago, David was confused about his sexuality. He said he began seeing other men on the sly and left his wife, Lynn, wondering what was keeping him out late.

The situation finally erupted, David said, when he needed the emotional support that Lynn could offer after a gay relationship of David's went on the rocks and he confided in her.

"I was pretty hurt. Confused," Lynn recalled. "I was afraid that our relationship was over. I thought it was my fault. I felt guilty."

David said that it took "a lot of pain, a lot of honesty" to keep their relationship together. He said that communication and emotional support were two very important ingredients for survival.

Sitting in the kitchen of their plant-laden apartment, they often turned to question each other as they spoke: "Was I supportive enough...?" "How did you feel...?" They have no role models to serve as buoys in their occasional "rough waters."

David said that at first he was "frightened" by his bisexuality because it went against "the accepted rule that you can't love two people at once."

Now, David said, "I don't feel that if I love another person it takes away from the love I have for Lynn."

Jealousy—emotional jealousy—is still the biggest problem, they admitted.

"It's like: 'Here I am again. I hope she doesn't get too involved and won't want to come back,'" David said.

He said that his jealous anxiety is quelled when they talk. Preventing the jealousy, David said, is a matter of respect for the other person—a phone call to let her know his plans, that he is okay and vice versa.

"I don't like the feelings that jealousy brings out in people. So I stop (those feelings) when I realize them. Most people don't realize when they're dealing on a jealousy level," David said.

Lynn said that she was jealous at first, but now she feels guilty. She said she feels guilty when they have both made plans to go out with other people and she has a good time, but David's good time flops.

The relationship was open for David to see other people before Lynn said she felt comfortable going out without David.

"It was just to do something," she emphasized, and going out was not purely sexual. "If David made plans, then I'd make plans with my girlfriends. Since David was going through an experimenting stage, I thought I would experiment too."

She said that David encouraged her. "I wasn't pushing her into sexual relations," David clarified. He said that his meeting other men was not purely sexual either. "I was meeting other people and I didn't want Lynn to sit at home."

Lynn laughed about the reactions she observed from her single girlfriends. She said that when she began talking to another man in a bar, they would rush up and inform him that Lynn was married.

It was hard for them to accept a married woman "going out just for fun" without her husband, she explained. "Single

people have ideals of marriage. They put it on a pedestal."

David said that single straight people look at his and Lynn's arrangement as a "threat to their ideal of marriage."

He added that married women are more understanding of Lynn than are others because they know what married life is like, they understand its realities.

"My definition of marriage is constantly changing. Marriage is a growing thing—growing together and apart and concentrating on the positive level," David said. He added that keeping open lines of communication between spouses is the way to keep a relationship on the positive level.

His bisexuality is "basically being free to love an individual, respect them and not feel threatened by that contact," David said.

He introduces Lynn to the men he cares about because he feels more comfortable when she knows them and because he said he won't exclude her from his life, he added.

But his gay relationships are mostly a secret to their heterosexual friends.

David said that they would not feel "comfortable" with the knowledge. "Why create problems when there isn't one?"

"They'd probably think it was immoral," he explained.

David said that he always mentions his marriage when he first begins talking to a gay man.

With amusement, he said that their usual reaction is, "Does your wife know? Does she mind? Well, she must be very understanding."

But other gays are "very acidic," he said. "They ask questions like, 'where's the little woman tonight?'" Or, David said, they would ask him what a married man was doing in a gay bar.

David said the sexual aspect of their extra-marital contacts is there but the lifestyle is not purely sexual, as people tend to think, nor are they the swingers they are typecast as.

"It's being comfortable with people and their lifestyle."

"We put each other first emotionally," David said. "And we deal with others if they are positive."



religious leaders...

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The Methodist Church believes that homosexuals are persons of sacred worth and are not condemned. But neither are they condoned, Leutchens said.

"Their relationship is not the best way to fulfill what God's plan is," he said. "The Methodist Church does not recognize homosexual marriage, but Leutchens said he believes they will some day be ordaining homosexuals."

Homosexuality is an issue that Berrgren says he has not completely settled in his own heart.

"I have as many problems with irresponsible sex as with homosexuality," he said.

The Church has a responsibility to preach the gospel, human freedom and dignity to all people, said Holthus, "but homosexuality is not a correct expression of the way we are made."

There are other things just as bad—adultery, idolatry, greed, he said.

The only sexual acts that the Catholic Church recognizes are heterosexual. Homosexuality is not recognized and has never been condoned throughout the 2000 years of the Church's history, Father Hrdlicka said.

Of course the homosexual can always repent, and receive the seal of secrecy, he said.

The Jewish faith by far takes the

strongest stand on homosexuality. Traditionally, according to the Bible and Jewish law, homosexuality was a crime punishable by death, Rabbi Karp said.

"That is the strict legal interpretation," Rabbi Karp said, "but among reformed Judaism, it is becoming a more and more accepted way of behavior."

"There are even homosexual Jewish congregations on the East and West coasts," he said. Society has readjusted itself towards homosexuality much like it has towards leprosy, Karp said. Leprosy was once considered a divine punishment but now is just a disease.

"Homosexuality is not an option. The homosexual cannot choose what he is so it is not a crime. It is a matter of biology."

"There are probably even some homosexual rabbis in the reform movement," he said. Orthodox and Conservative Judaism is still much more strict.

Attitudes on contraception and abortion, too, run the gamut. Lutheran or Methodist churches are opposed to contraceptives.

Contraceptives are to protect the family unit that is already there, Holthus said. People should be able to have as many children as one can morally care for, and it is perfectly correct for people to abstain from having them.

Abortion should be given a great deal of careful thought, Holthus continued. The Church is against abortion as a means of

birth control.

The Catholic Church recognizes no form of birth control except abstinence during a woman's fertile time, Father Hrdlicka said. He reemphasized that each sexual act should be left open for the possibility of a child.

Abortion is murder in any form, he added. "The soul enters the child at conception. In cases where the mother's life may be in danger, the church teaches that both lives should be saved. Life is a sacred thing."

Contraceptives were spoke of in the Talmud and permitted. But Jewish couples were required to have two children first, said Rabbi Karp.

Abortion is an option which in certain circumstances can be used up to the 24th hour, only if it is a matter of life or death of the mother, he said.

Among Reformed Jews, however, Rabbi Karp said other criterias due to the complexity of society is being considered.

"If a child is not wanted and will suffer as a result of that, the feeling is that to bear that child is a crime against it," he said.

"People seem to look at the Church negatively," Berrgren summed up.

"The Church is out to say yes—yes, to life, and no to death. It's just easier to write out ten 'no's' that bring about death in some way or another. Christ really says yes to the whole world."