

Straight and Gay

Heterosexuality and Homosexuality



Straight and gay are two words that have to do with sexual desire and sex.

A straight or heterosexual person is someone who is sexually attracted to people of the other or opposite sex. *Heteros* is the ancient Greek word for *other*.

I like those Greek words.



I like pictures. I think a picture's worth a thousand words.

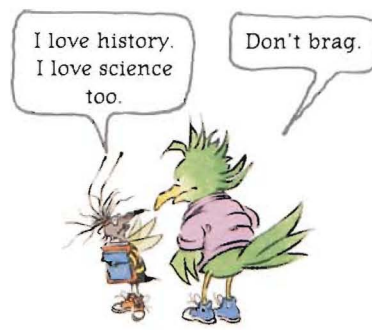
In a heterosexual relationship, two people of opposite sexes—a male and a female—may be attracted to, may fall in love with, or may have a sexual relationship with each other.

A gay or homosexual person is someone who is sexually attracted to people of the same sex. *Homos* is the ancient Greek word for *same*. In a homosexual relationship, two people of the same sex—a male and a male, or a female and a female—may be attracted to, may fall in love with, and may have a sexual relationship with each other.

A homosexual relationship between two females is also called a lesbian relationship. The word *lesbian* began to be used in the late nineteenth century. It refers to the time, about 600 B.C., when the great female poet Sappho lived on the Greek island of Lesbos. Sappho wrote about friendship and love between women.



The ancient Greeks thought that love between two men was the highest form of love. In the ancient Greek city-state of Sparta, in about 1000 B.C., it was hoped that male lovers would be in the same army regiment. People thought that if a warrior was in the same regiment as his lover, he would fight harder in order to impress him. The Spartan army was one of the most powerful and feared armies in ancient Greece.



There have been gay relationships all through history, even before ancient Greece.

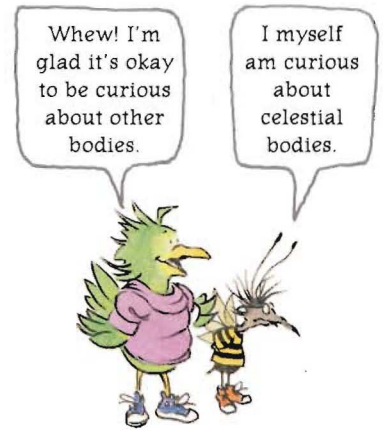
How people feel and think about homosexuality has a lot to do with the culture and the times in which they live.

Scientists do not completely understand or agree on why one person grows up to be homosexual and another person grows up to be heterosexual. In fact, there may be more than one reason.

Some scientists believe that being homosexual or heterosexual is not something you choose—just as you cannot choose what color skin you were born with or whether you were born male or female. They believe that a person is born with traits—with the biological makeup—that make him or her develop into a straight person or a gay person. Other scientists believe that events during a person's childhood help determine

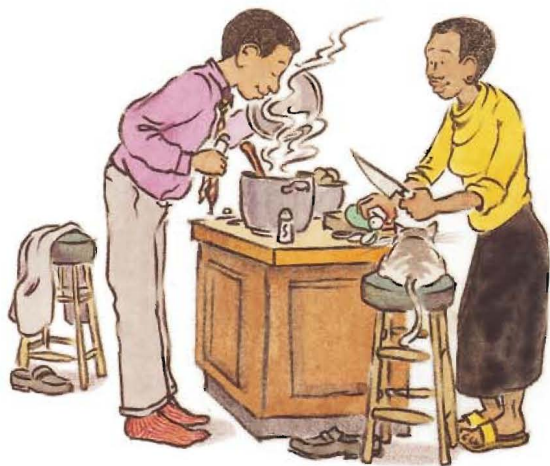
whether a person will grow up to be gay or straight.

Sometimes as kids are growing up, boys become curious about other boys and girls become curious about other girls. They may look at and even touch each other's bodies. This is a normal kind of exploring and does not have anything to do with whether a girl or a boy is or will be heterosexual or homosexual.



Dreaming about or having a crush on a person of the same sex also does not necessarily mean that a girl or a boy is or will be homosexual.

Some people disapprove of gay men and lesbian women. Some even hate homosexuals only because they are homosexual. People may feel this way toward homosexuals because they think homosexuals are different



from them or that gay relationships are wrong. Usually these people know little or nothing about homosexuals, and their views are often based on fears or misinformation, not on facts. People are often afraid of things they know little or nothing about.

Some people are sexually

attracted to people of the opposite sex and to people of the same sex. People who are attracted to, may fall in love with, and may have a sexual relationship with both males and females are called bisexual. *Bi* means *two*.

A person's daily life—making a home, having friends and fun, raising children, working, being

in love—is, for the most part, the same whether he or she is heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual.

If a person has any questions or thoughts about his or her sexual feelings, talking to someone he or she knows and trusts—a parent, relative, good friend, teacher, doctor, nurse, or clergy member—can be helpful.

