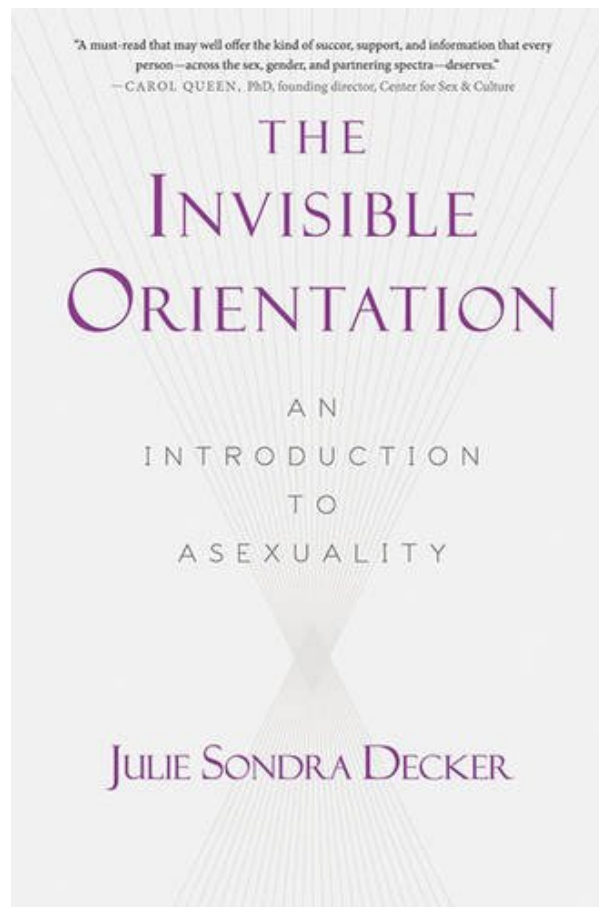


THE INVISIBLE ORIENTATION: AN INTRODUCTION TO ASEXUALITY BY JULIE SONDRA DECKER



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"A must-read that may well offer the kind of succor, support, and information that every person—across the sex, gender, and partnering spectra—deserves."

— CAROL QUEEN, PhD, founding director, Center for Sex & Culture

THE INVISIBLE ORIENTATION

AN
INTRODUCTION
TO
ASEXUALITY

JULIE SONDR A DECKER

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Lambda Literary Award 2014 Finalist in LGBT Nonfiction

Foreword Reviews' INDIEFAB Book of the Year Award 2014 Finalist in Family & Relationships

Independent Publisher Book Awards 2015 (IPPY) Silver Medal in Sexuality/Relationships

Next Generation Indie Book Awards 2015 Winner in LGBT

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What if you weren't sexually attracted to anyone?

A growing number of people are identifying as asexual. They aren't sexually attracted to anyone, and they consider it a sexual orientation—like gay, straight, or bisexual.

Asexuality is the invisible orientation. Most people believe that “everyone” wants sex, that “everyone” understands what it means to be attracted to other people, and that “everyone” wants to date and mate. But that's where asexual people are left out—they don't find other people sexually attractive, and if and when they say so, they are very rarely treated as though that's okay.

When an asexual person comes out, alarming reactions regularly follow; loved ones fear that an asexual person is sick, or psychologically warped, or suffering from abuse. Critics confront asexual people with accusations of following a fad, hiding homosexuality, or making excuses for romantic failures. And all of this contributes to a discouraging master narrative: there is no such thing as “asexual.” Being an asexual person is a lie or an illness, and it needs to be fixed.

In *The Invisible Orientation*, Julie Sondra Decker outlines what asexuality is, counters misconceptions, provides resources, and puts asexual people's experiences in context as they move through a very sexualized world. It includes information for asexual people to help understand their orientation and what it means for their relationships, as well as tips and facts for those who want to understand their asexual friends and loved ones.

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Most helpful customer reviews

25 of 26 people found the following review helpful.

This book gave me the words I was lacking to fully express myself, and answered questions I wasn't sure how to ask.

By Bibliotropic .net

I've talked in various places before about being asexual, and what that means for me. It's something I've understood for a while now, and have grown pretty comfortable with, even if sometimes it's a bit frustrating since it's one of those things that isn't very well understood and is often mocked or belittled by people who don't know that much about it.

And for every person that's ever asked me a stupid question about it, I wish I could just press a copy of *The Invisible Orientation* into their hands and say, "Here. All the answers are in here."

I want to clarify. When I say stupid question, I don't mean questions like, "So, what's asexuality?" or "You mean you're not sexually attracted to anyone?" These are smart questions. These are the questions that get asked by people who have understanding and compassion and the ability to realise that there's more to the world than just what they've seen so far. Though really, most of the ignorance comes in the form of commentary rather than questions. "You can't be asexual because you're not an amoeba/bacterium/etc." "You must have been abused as a child." "My daughter went through a phase like that too." "You're too ugly to want to have sex with anyway." And yes, I've gotten those comments, and others, over the years. *The Invisible Orientation* addresses this, from both sides. It's not just a book for people who think they might be asexual. It's also a book for people who've found out someone they know is asexual and they don't know what to do or say, or just for those who want to understand asexuality better.

Asexuality, for those who want it in a nutshell, is a lack of sexual attraction to people. It doesn't mean that a person's genitals don't function, that they are necessarily repulsed by sex, or that they can't experience sexual pleasure. It simply means that someone doesn't experience sexual attraction. Some asexuals experience romantic attraction, some don't. Some are willing to include sex in their relationships, some aren't.

It's understandably a bit confusing for a lot of people, especially those who haven't encountered asexuality before. *The Invisible Orientation* does stress a lot that behaviour is not the same as attraction, so yes, it is indeed possible for an asexual person to have sex and even enjoy it even if they don't find it the driving force in their lives that many non-asexual people do. Decker likens it a few times to a gay man who has sex with a woman on a frequent basis; that doesn't mean he's not sexually attracted to men, nor does it mean he is sexually attracted to women. It's taken for granted that a person's sexual preference will dictate their romantic relationships, just as it's taken for granted that a romantic relationship will become sexual (or else it's not a "real" or mature relationship). But what if this isn't the case? What if someone wants to be in a romantic relationship without wanting to bring sex into it at all? Does this lessen the romantic attraction in the relationship? Does it devalue the relationship somehow if both parties are okay with that?

It's a complex issue, in no small part because asexuality isn't well understood by most people. And Decker takes great pains to shed so much light on the whole thing, every aspect (or at least every aspect that I can think of, plus some I hadn't considered before), and does so in a way that is brilliantly comprehensive and comprehensible.

Aside from being an amazing resource that gives clarity to many issues ("If someone has sex can they still call themselves asexual?" "What if I still have sexual attraction to people but it's really low and not that

important?"), this book gave me words to properly describe so many things that I've felt but didn't have any idea how to express. I've known I'm asexual for some time, but how do I defend that against people who can rightly say, "Your experiences with sex weren't that great, and your hormones were messed up at a key time of your development, and you did experience abuse as a child," and that all leads them to the 'reason' I'm asexual. Those statements may all be true, and I can't deny them, but every time someone brought that up, I didn't have the right words to say why that all felt wrong, that they didn't cause my orientation any more than an overbearing mother caused a man to be gay. I'd get frustrated and angry at my inability to express what I felt. Now, I have the words to say it all, and there is no end to the amount that I'm grateful for that.

This is, admittedly, the only book I've read on asexuality, so I can't say for certain, but I honestly can't imagine a better one. It came to me at the perfect time, erasing so much stress from my life within a week simply by allowing me to see, in someone else's words and experience, all the things I've been struggling to reconcile. This is a fantastic resource for those who are asexual and those who are curious about asexuality, anyone who's got questions about themselves or others, and I highly recommend it to anyone seeking answers about the issue.

20 of 20 people found the following review helpful.

I know there are a lot of people like me out there who don't understand asexuality

By Kendra Holliday

I know there are a lot of people like me out there who don't understand asexuality, so I'm glad this book has been created as a reference guide to educate the public about 1 in 100 people who identify as asexual. Asexuality is not a disorder. Asexuality is a sexual orientation characterized by sexual attraction to – are you ready for this?? – no one. Asexuality is an orientation, like bi, straight, gay, etc.

This book is very well-written, clear and concise. The author wrote this book in order to provide the next generation of asexual people a chance to live life more fully and without self-doubt.

Like many other things, asexuality is on a spectrum – some asexuals choose to partner with others, and some don't.

This book dispels many misconceptions and offers a lot of great resources.

18 of 18 people found the following review helpful.

A GREAT Introduction to Asexuality for the Novice

By B. Bergstrom

As someone who has encountered asexual people both offline and online this book was most definitely a good guide on the subject. While I relate to many of the ideas presented, I was unaware of the exact position an asexual person is in when they come out. It's not common for someone, even a wanna-be ally to understand what is going on. I learned a lot in this book and shall use it in the future for reference should I encounter any of these situations. I also hope this book becomes a valuable resource to the asexual community as a means of coming out about their sexual orientation. The author presents each situation in a very comfortable manner so a person who is curious or being presented with asexuality can easily present it to their family, friends, or loved ones without feeling like being backed into a corner. I thought that was awesome. The book also lists a wide variety of resources to go to online to learn more information on asexuality, including her own YouTube channel. I would recommend this book to anyone who has heard of asexuality and dismisses it as a legit orientation. The book is also for anyone who is confused about the orientation and wants to learn more about it. The book is NOT written to say one orientation is better than others. I myself thought I knew a lot about the subject having had friends all over the asexual spectrum. I enjoyed learning more and I hope more people pick up this book and learn just one thing they did not know. Great resource!!

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