

Draw My Life: The Journey Thus Far



By: Mary Rose Kurkowiak

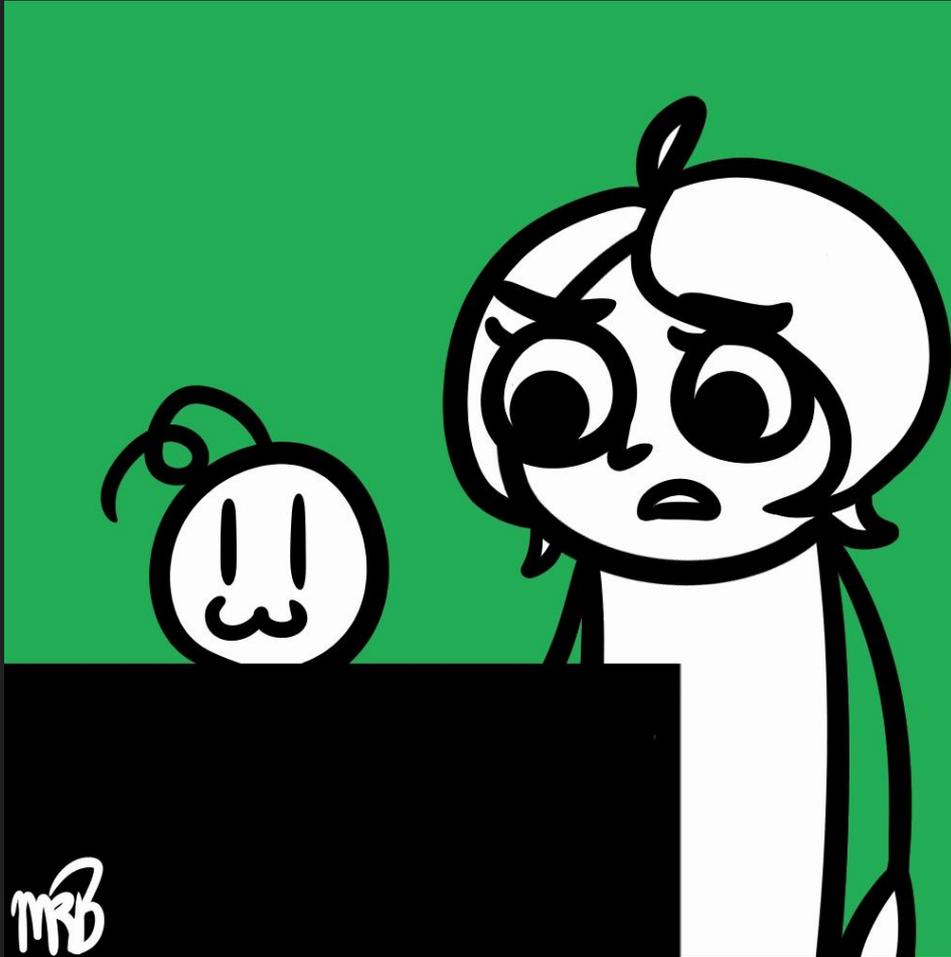
Introduction

Hello, my name is Mary. I have been questioning my sexuality for almost a year. I spend a lot of time trying looking for the reason I am the way I am. This project helped me organize my thoughts and figure out who I am. I would like to share my life and journey with you.



That's Not *My Little Pony*...

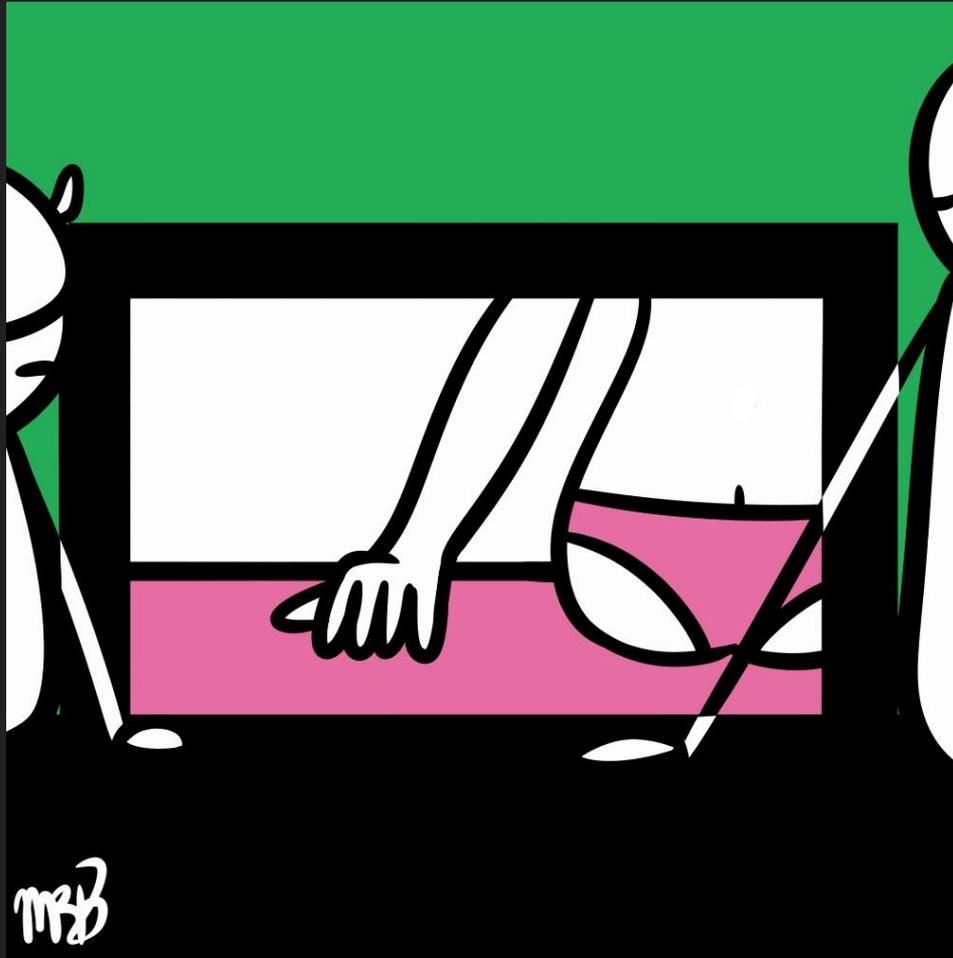
The first time I'd ever seen porn was with my sister when I was five or six. She was too young to remember, but I remember it very vividly. We downloaded an episode of *My Little Pony*, but... it was NOT *My Little Pony*.





O' Naturale

A few years later, I was eating lunch with my Dad. He pulled out his phone and started showing me pictures of naked women. He said he preferred natural boobs over implants. Despite not having gone through puberty yet, I was self conscious about how my chest would look like in a few years.



Daughter ≠ Friend

Around when I was nine or ten, my Dad started watching an adult film with me in the room. The place he lived at that time only had one room, so I had no place to escape to. I don't remember anything explicit, however, the video showcased a bunch of scantily clad women. This is not a video you should watch with your child.



Road Rage

When I was in 8th grade, my grandfather died. My Dad was really upset about it and it was one of the only times I've seen him cry. During the car ride to meet my Mom, my Dad snapped and started yelling at me. He asked if I really loved him. I was stunned into silence and cried until we pulled into the parking lot. With my Mom there, he ask me to give three reasons why I loved him. I still could not speak and he left very upset.



Disappointment

The summer before my senior year of high school, I received terrible news. My father had been arrested. At first I laughed it off. Then, I saw the article on FaceBook: "NY man arrested on the side of the highway nude and carrying a camera." The article included his mugshot and more details about the incident. Commenters at the bottom called him disgusting, but that was my Dad. I knew him more than what they saw. If you Google my name, I believe his mugshot will come up. I haven't checked since then.



Torn

At some point along my journey, I got stuck. What is love? Can I feel it? Do people love me? After what happened with my Dad in the car, I have a hard time telling people that I love them. I am afraid that every time I do say it they will ask if I am lying. I struggle to understand what love feels like. Is it unconditional? Do I have to do something to gain someone's affection?



Puberty

High school was my time for sexual exploration. I was old enough that I started to get "urges". I satisfied these cravings by shamelessly looking at pictures on Tumblr.

In school, I had many crushes on people, but I never dated. Most of the people I liked I knew I could never date. One kid was gay and definitely wasn't interested. I noticed I had a pattern of liking guys that I would not or could not date for one reason or another.



I Just Like It

In college, I experienced more freedom and have been able to express myself more. Every year, I cut my hair shorter and shorter because I like how it looks. My Dad thinks I "look like a twelve year old boy." I also use men's deodorant and I like the smell of Irish Spring body wash. My Dad forced me to get fruity, feminine body wash because I am a woman. Sure, I identify as a woman, but I am not girly. I just want to do as I please. Who's it going to hurt if I smell manly?



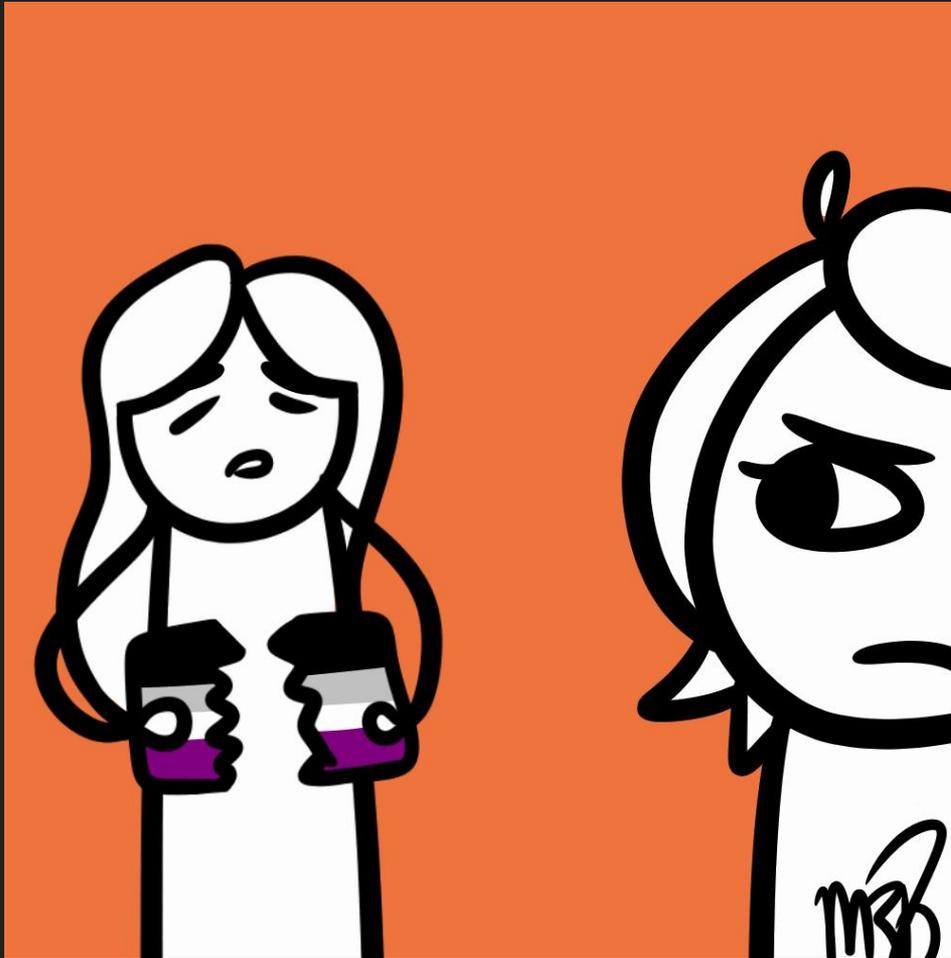
Boyfriend 1

Boyfriend 1 wanted to kiss me the day I told him I liked him. I said no. On the first date, we kissed and I *HATED* it. It felt and sounded gross. I wasn't into it. I went home and cried. I wanted to break up with him, but my Mom said I would like it eventually. I told him I was not ready to kiss and he backed off. I felt bad not letting him show affection, but it made me feel uncomfortable. My Mom said since it had been a couple of months, I owed him a kiss. I did it, but I still did not like it. We were texting one day and I did not say that I loved him. He noticed and called me out for it.



Questioning

This was the first time I thought about being asexual. The definition of asexuality is having a lack of sexual attraction. I was confused because I thought I felt sexual attraction. I have crushes and urges. Maybe I was aromantic? That did not seem right. Regardless, I did not have feelings for Boyfriend 1 and I needed time to figure myself out. I told him what was going on and broke up with him. I was worried that I needed more time to develop feelings for him, but I knew that if I couldn't do it in three months, it was never going to happen.



“Coming Out”

I was really scared to tell my parents that I was questioning. If I did not have feelings for Boyfriend 1, I would have to break up with him and I knew they would be upset. I told them and I was not met with acceptance, but a bunch of excuses for why I was wrong. 1) I must be a late bloomer, 2) I haven't had many experiences, 3) I'm too young to know, 4) I'll find someone in the future 5) It has to be a hormonal imbalance, and 6) I need to overcome issues with a therapist. Because they were my parents and I thought they knew best, so I listened to them.

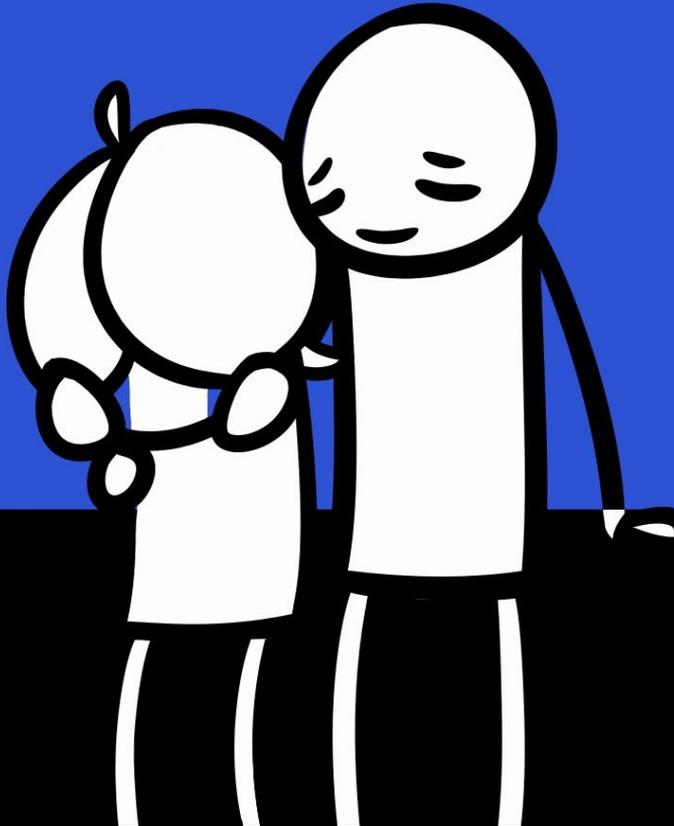


First Time

I felt a lot different with Boyfriend 2. I am actually affectionate with him. However, we don't kiss because neither of us like it. I realized that I did just need to find the right person! One night, he was staying over and we were planning on doing stuff. When we flirted, it was fun. It felt good, but when we started getting into it, I did not like it. I tried really hard to enjoy it, but it did not feel good. I told him to stop. It was really embarrassing, but he listened and understood.

Comfort

I had a mental breakdown and started sobbing. I felt so bad and I was mad at myself for not feeling anything. I was looking forward to doing this for a long time. Boyfriend 2 stayed and let me cry. I told him about everything I had gone through. He understood and was very accepting. When I think back about this experience, I feel really embarrassed and uncomfortable. It flashes back in my mind every so often and I cringe to myself.



MRB



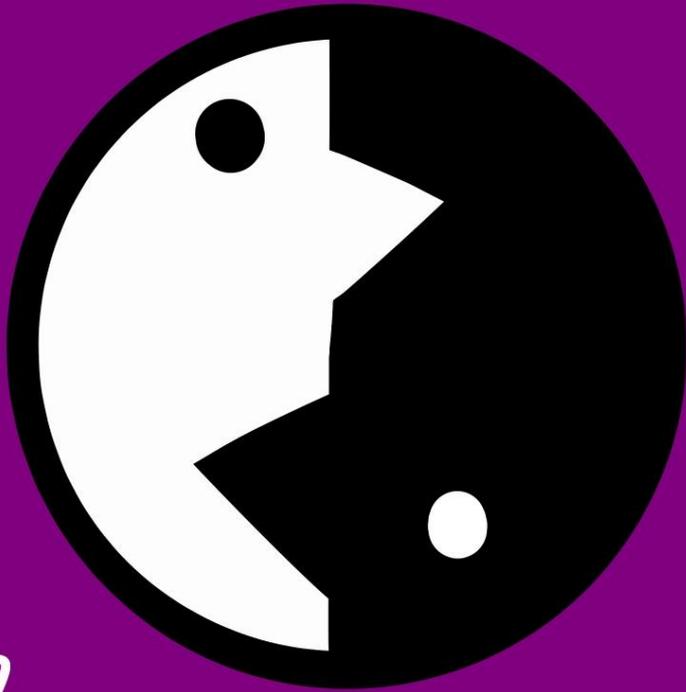
Trip to the Gynecologist

I went to see a gynecologist to get a prescription for birth control. I thought that maybe I freaked out during my first time with Boyfriend 2 because I was scared to get pregnant. I told her what happened and she said it was normal to not feel anything the first time. A lot of women get scared, too. It was reassuring and comforting to hear a doctor say it.



Who Am I?

I look back on everything and try to piece together who I am and what made me know I am. Do I have an identity? Do I need one? How did I end up like this? What is love? Will I ever find it? I am really scared that I will be alone my entire life.



Conclusion

The first I was questioning, I asked an LGBTQ+ group online if I was asexual. They said no. I always asked people outside of myself what they thought I was. This project helped me reflect and figure out who I am from within. I did some research on asexuality and read about other people's personal experiences. I realized that what I was feeling was just like what they felt. I finally felt safe saying that I was asexual.

Coming Out for Realsies

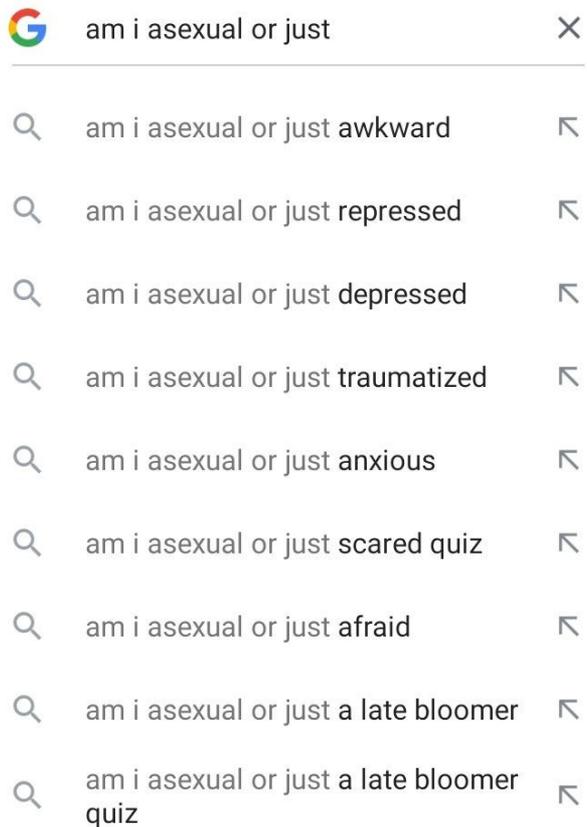
The first person I told was my close friend. I wanted to know if it was okay to say I am asexual. She was accepting, so I was going to tell Boyfriend 2. I told him I needed to talk to him and waited for him to respond. I was really nervous. I told my parents I was nervous to talk to him and they asked what it was about. I was going to wait to tell them since they were not understanding when I told them when I was questioning. They pushed me to tell them, so I did. I wasn't expecting the reaction I got. My Mom freaked and told me I was just a late bloomer, ect. I've heard it before. My Stepdad was worried about how I would tell Boyfriend 2 because he was afraid I would offend him. I was really upset with them and told them to drop the subject. I think they would have taken it better if I came out as gay. When Boyfriend 2 responded, he was very accepting. I knew he would be. He said he understood because he went through something similar. I was happy that he was understanding. However, I was still really upset with my parents. Later, my Mom apologized to me. She said she did not understand what I was feeling, but loved me anyway. I have not told my Dad because I don't feel that I need to. Sex is not something I feel comfortable talking to my Dad about. There is still a lot I have to learn about myself and I am excited to continue my journey.

The Asexual Community



The *Finding Out* textbook mentions that the A in LGBTQA+ stands for asexuality and also for ally. It has a section to talk about the A, but only talks about allies. I used to be an ally, and I think the community should treat them better. However, I think the A should stand for asexuality because asexuality is a sexuality whereas allies are not. The book talks a lot about the struggles of different sexualities, but completely glosses over asexuality. One of the biggest problems for the asexual community is that people treat it as if it doesn't exist. The ace community jokingly calls themselves unicorns because they are treated like mythical creatures. It seems like they get the most backlash on Tumblr from people in the LGBTQ+ community telling them that they are not valid. There are also so many wonderful blogs telling asexuals not to listen to them and that they are indeed valid.

The Asexual Community Continued

- 
- A screenshot of a Google search interface. The search bar contains the text "am i asexual or just" followed by a close button (X). Below the search bar, a list of search suggestions is displayed, each preceded by a magnifying glass icon and followed by a right-pointing arrow icon. The suggestions are:
- am i asexual or just awkward
 - am i asexual or just repressed
 - am i asexual or just depressed
 - am i asexual or just traumatized
 - am i asexual or just anxious
 - am i asexual or just scared quiz
 - am i asexual or just afraid
 - am i asexual or just a late bloomer
 - am i asexual or just a late bloomer quiz

Some know from a young age, but for many others it takes a long time to realize that they are asexual. They get a bunch of reasons to explain away their feelings similar to the reasons I got. Before I came out, I didn't understand that I didn't feel sexual attraction because I didn't know what it was. A lot of people realize they are asexual after looking it up online. Everything just clicks. I was able to educate myself because no one else could. I realized that there is a difference between sexual, romantic and aesthetic attraction. It was confusing to understand at first, but everything makes so much more sense.

The Dangers the Asexual Community Faces

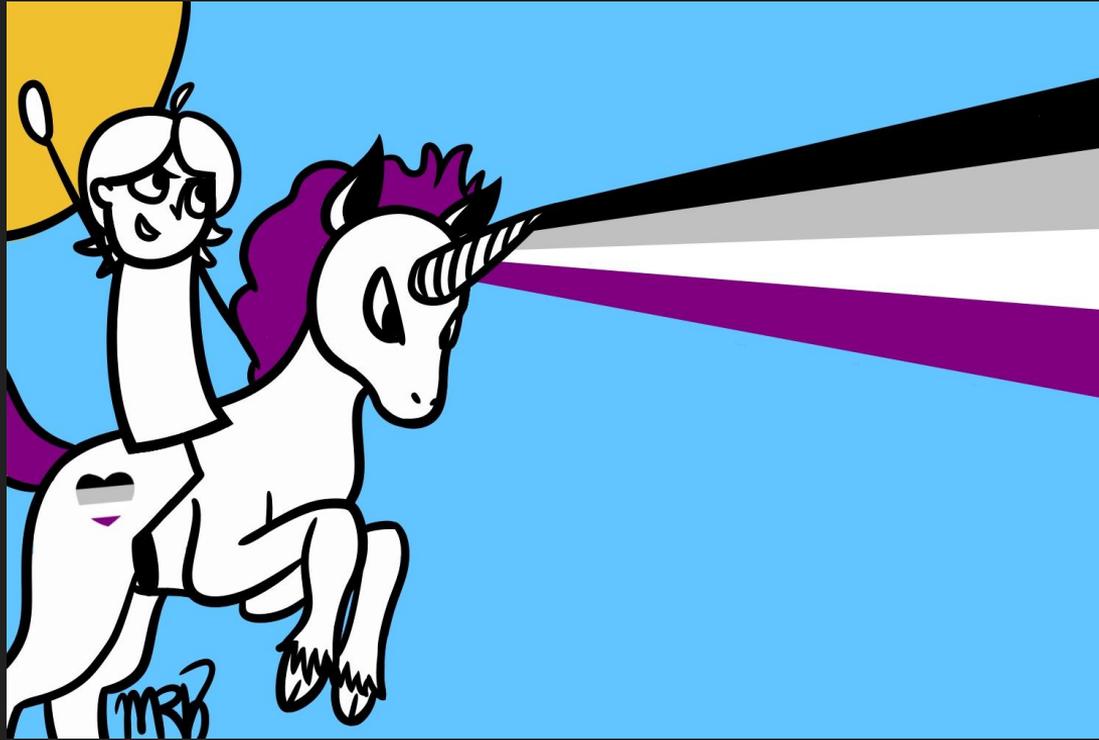
Some people don't think asexuals should be part of the LGBTQ+ community because they don't face the same hardships. They don't have to worry about being thrown out of their house because of who they are. They just don't want to have sex. A lot of people don't have sex and they aren't oppressed because of it. However, asexuals do face danger. People say that asexuals are just late bloomers or that they went through trauma. Some people think that they can "fix" an asexual. This has led to rape and murder. Below are a few articles on violence asexuals face. Here is a quote from the first article from an asexual, two-spirit person, "I think there should be more discussion on how ace people may be vulnerable to sexual harassment and assault that addresses the nuances ace survivors may have to endure and navigate."

<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/jmkliegman/asexuality-sexual-assault-harassment-me-too>

<https://www.womenslaw.org/about-abuse/abuse-specific-communities/lgbtqia-victims/forms-abuse/what-forms-abuse-are-unique-1>

https://www.reddit.com/r/asexuality/comments/cdmfv0/asexual_instagram_star_bianca_was_murdered_by_a_n/

<https://www.gaystarnews.com/article/asexual-trans-man-abuse/>



Thank you for reading about
my journey!