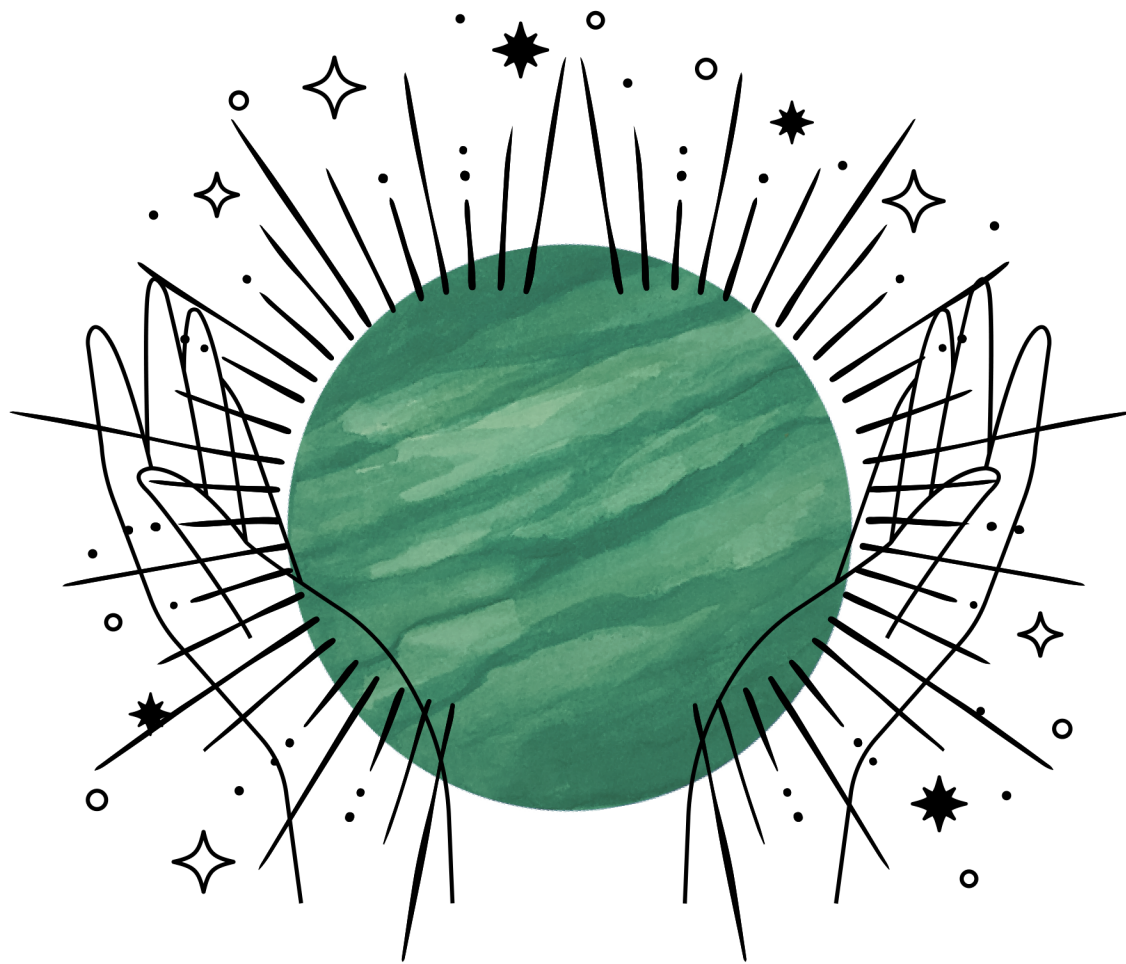


AROMANTICISM



February
2024

Voices
from
Alberta

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AROMANTICISM:

THE "A" IN 2SLGBTQIA+

**EXPERIENCING LITTLE TO NO
ROMANTIC ATTRACTION**

**AN IDENTITY THAT INCLUDES
A SPECTRUM OF DIVERSE
PERSONAL EXPERIENCES,
UNRELATED TO ONE'S CHOICE
TO ENGAGE (OR NOT ENGAGE)
IN ROMANTIC BEHAVIOURS &
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Aromantics: A colorful rarity in the news

EX-LAX MOVIES
The Awakening of "Mr. A."

MR. A. Whew! I hate the very thought of having to take a cathartic.
MR. B. You wouldn't if you'd try Ex-Lax. It tastes sweet—just like chocolate.

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The action of Ex-Lax is thorough, yet *gentle*. No shock. No strain. No weakening after-effects. Just an easy, comfortable movement that brings blessed relief. Try Ex-Lax the next time you need a laxative. It's good for every member of the family.

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EX-LAX
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FORTUNE writes of Business as no other magazine can—in the lively realities of plans, policies, problems and people.

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"Dave Burp"

SCARCE

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70

(Jaclyn, she/her, Red Deer)

 @jbell32

I Do Not Grieve/Aromantic Terror

I do not grieve for what I do not feel.
No, this burning, twisting mess isn't grief—
this forest fire sparked in my chest, my head
is made of something else
that hides under beds and around corners.

when my problems are mountains too tall to climb
or I see how two trees lean on each other
pillars of support, unmoving, unyielding
a voice slithers into my mind
and shreds any sense of certainty in a whisper.

if there's no chance of romance
I could be helpless and hopeless in the darkness
if I'm crying or dying on the forest floor
how long will it take for someone, anyone to find me
if their hearts are tied to their partners?

I do not grieve for what I do not feel.
still, I wish for that comfort of certain company
so the shadows don't swallow me whole.
No, this torrent of torment isn't grief at all—
it's terror.

(Fern, any pronouns, Edmonton)

 @ferns.notebook

It's taken me a lifetime to accept my aromanticism and probably a decade to embrace it. No surprise, given all the messages our culture gives us about measuring our value in terms of being in a relationship. Even moving from straight to 2SLGBTQIA contexts doesn't help. The feel-good slogan "love wins"—so often deployed by allies to make gay/lesbian relationships palatable to the general population—reinforces the primacy of being in a couple.

A couple of recent exchanges have helped me to see how far I've come.

In hospital, waiting for surgery on a broken elbow, a young nurse asked who was going to pick me up from the hospital after my surgery and take me home. I said I wasn't sure. "Don't you have a husband or kids or grandkids who can pick you up?" she asked. "I live alone," I responded.

Another young woman who I'd hired to clean my condo while convalescing from my surgery asked me how long I'd been living there. "Seventeen years," I responded. "Always on your own?" she asked. "Yes," I answered. "That's sad," she said. "I kind of like living on my own," I replied.

Years ago, these comments might have devastated me. Now I can laugh at them. But it's taken decades of introspection, of working through shame and hurt and bafflement, to get me to this place.

I identify as queer, ace and aro, and those identities have got me together, as the drag queens say, and helped me to understand my life. It's more than that—it's given me courage to live my life. I spent decades of my life


internalizing all the messaging about being less than if you aren't in a relationship, either straight or queer. I can remember being at a dinner party in grad school, where the topic of conversation was to go round the room and tell everyone how you met your partner. I was the only single person there, fresh out of a disastrous relationship with another grad student—a baby-faced Englishman—which had mainly confirmed my dislike of straight sex. I felt humiliated.

Now I would actively work to shut down a conversation like that but then I just felt like a failure. There's something corrosive to the soul about growing up feeling like something is wrong with you. It's hard to find the confidence, the mental and emotional resources to combat the messaging.

But I've also come to realize that it's too easy, too sad to hide in other people's narratives of how life is supposed to be. I am not the sad spinster aunt or the sad single lesbian and it's time for me to say this to the world.

Discovering the language of queer, aro and ace have saved my life in many ways. They've affirmed my life, allowed me to see that I'm not broken, that my life experiences are valid. Finally, I get to see myself as whole. Now in my early sixties, I feel like the fun is just getting started. Being queer, aro and ace have taught me there are no rules. We get to explore new ways of navigating the world and I feel like life is full of possibilities.

(Jeanne Wood, she/her, Edmonton)

 @jeannekwood





AROMANTIC FLOWERS AND THEIR SYMBOLISM

1. Daffodil

Narcissus

Symbolism: Most often known for rebirth and good fortune, but also less commonly known for joy, self-love, vitality, and resilience.

2. Zinnia

Zinnia Elegans

Symbolism: Affection for new, old, and lost friendships; remembrance. They may also symbolize a zest for life, strength, community support, and acclaim.

3. Lily of the Incas

Alstroemeria

Symbolism: Energy, happiness, support, optimism and friendship, with independence and vitality as well. They may also represent prosperity, and platonic love.

4. Daisy

Bellis Perennis

Symbolism: Deep platonic love, friendship, happiness, warmth, and wisdom. They have also been used to represent community bonds, loyalty, and support.

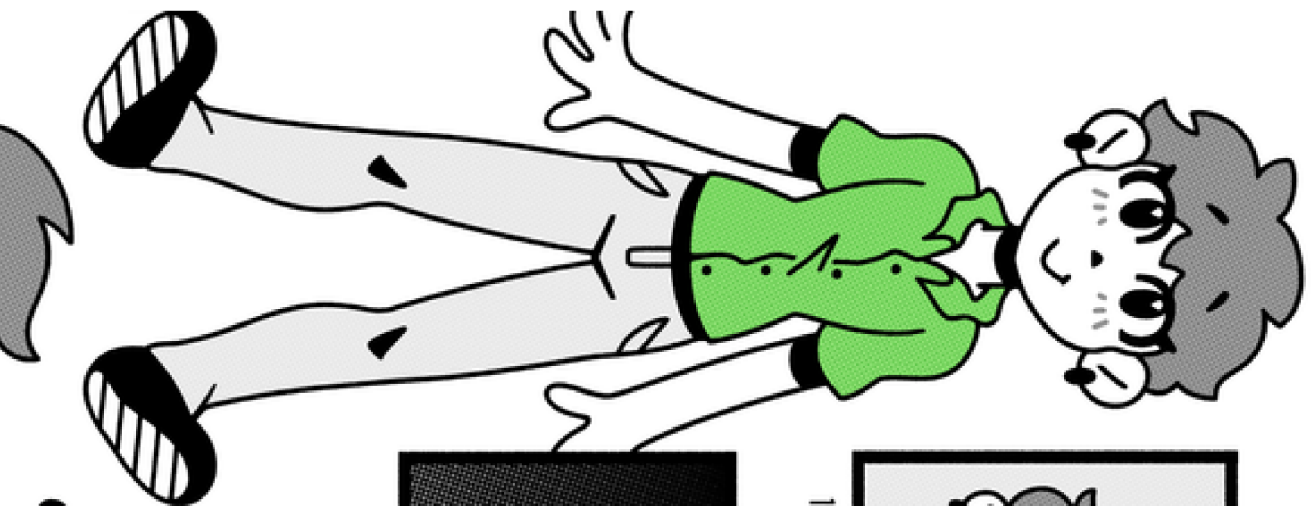
5. Bachelor's Button - Cornflower

Centaurea Cyanus

Symbolism: Commonly known for single blessedness, or the practice of being happily single. Also known for grace, bravery, loyalty, and independence.

(Endeavour, Edmonton)

some things i felt when experiencing romantic attraction for the first (and so far, only) time



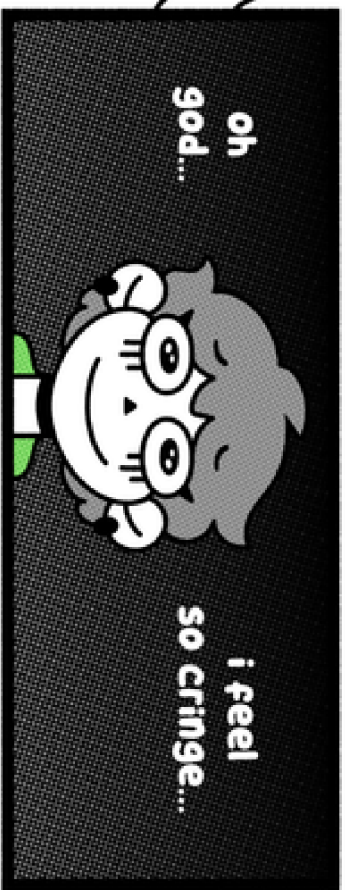
@superflatpsyche



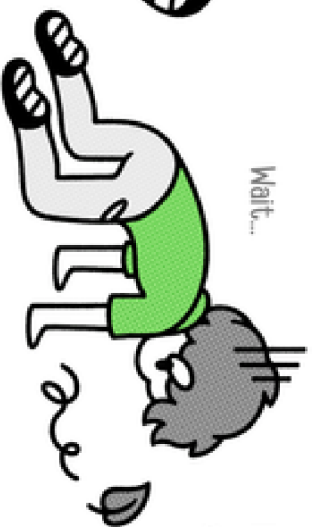
1. Intrusive thoughts about a specific person



2. Irregular heartbeat (weird and fluttery)



3. Inability to stop smiling (I lost control of my face)



Wait...
Romantic attraction isn't consciously thinking about the people you like? It's an involuntary physical reaction???

Even though this experience totally confused me, it helped me to realize that I'm on the aromantic spectrum. I personally identify with the **greyromantic** and **cupioromantic** sublabels - in my opinion, romance is cute and cool. I just don't "feel" it the way other people do!

Single in Politics

“Husband, Father,” read the flyer as I opened the mailbox. A photo of my MLA smiled up at me, ready for my vote. Husband, Father it told me as though it meant anything to me. Most of the men I know are husbands and many are fathers. Healthcare policy? Education? The future of the province? No, this appeal was a moral one.

“Married people are seen as more mature, stable, honest, happy, kind, and loving. Singles were more often called immature, insecure, self-centred, unhappy, lonely, and ugly (but also, on the positive side, independent)” -*The Unrecognized Stereotyping and Discrimination Against Singles* by DePaulo and Morris

This is the crux of it. Single people aren't trusted. We are children not mature enough for relationships or screw-ups who bailed out of the one serious relationship that matters in our society. Asexuals and aromantics, a group incredibly likely to be single, bear the brunt of this discrimination in politics.

Displaying family is a time-honoured tradition in Canadian politics, though it is more commonly done by men. I call them “Breed to lead” photos because they tell us nothing except that having children and grandchildren means that a parent is more invested in the community than a single person or childless(free) couple.

We all have these biases. My MP sent me a Christmas card (I am on a lot of mailing lists) that included a photo of him and his dog standing in a park in the riding. My



sister cracked “What, he can't get his family to join him?” because of course his family needs to be there for his professional communications. My sister and I never got dragged into my dad's work but we expect it of our politicians. My MP has a good excuse, as though he needs one. His children are grown and like to keep a low profile and his wife died several years ago. He's a grown man who lives on his own but we see his inability to drag his family into his career as a sign of personal failure, as a sign that he is lonely, and unsupported by those around him.

Marriage is still the landmark by which we judge people. A checkpoint that is unskippable in the lives of the public. To stay single is an affront to the norm, to be happily single is an affront to public decency. Our politicians know that. Divorcees still need a good excuse, people appearing alone in holiday cards are remarked upon, we look at single people and say, “there must be something wrong with them.”

This bias needs to end. No more judging people who stand on their own. No more assuming that marriage and children is proof of dependability or kindness over anything else. No more dismissing the love and support of friends, extended family, and community that we all rely on. Single people are loving. Single people are invested in their communities. It is time that we not just acknowledge this but welcome them into our politics.

(Rowan, ney/nem/nier, Calgary)

 @rowanwiebe

Aromantic Chainmail Jewellery



(Teigan Tulsie, he/him, Calgary)

  @teigan_tulsie

Someday

a comfy chair waits
for warm tea with honey
I brush aside cat hair
and curl up under a soft blanket
among the shelves stacked tall
with books and plants
trinkets and memories
music floats through the air
as rain falls on the glass
breathe in... and out
it's peaceful, cozy, just for me
a quiet place, but never lonely
and sometimes I'll open the door
to share with you
our little group is perfect
for movie nights in
or flitting around town
and eating takeout noodles
and it will be all I need
and I know it will be mine
someday



(Fern, any pronouns, Edmonton)

 @ferns.notebook



Riddle me this, kisser of lips

What about this makes me wrong
That I don't want to kiss you deep
That I don't want to have children with you
Or is it that I just don't want?
What about this makes you right
That you want to kiss me deep
That you want to have children with me
Or is it that you just want?

(Thomas, Edmonton area)



date

a number in the week
a singular moment
a to-do list

a change in routine
a hand, reaching

a ledge, falling

what is a date
what are you
what am I
what happens now

does anything need to?
I don't need you
not like this

but I'd like to imagine

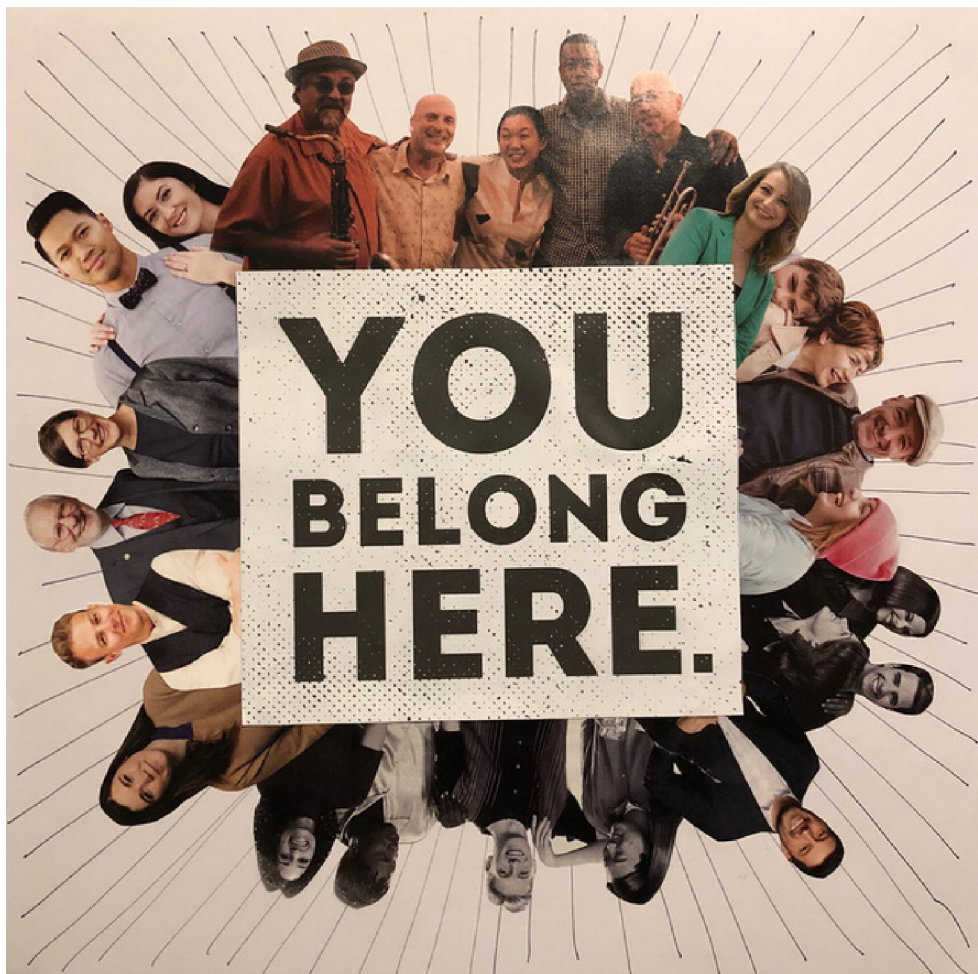
a mark on the calendar
a date my heart shifts

a question with no answer
...yet
...ever?

that would be fine, really

I'd just like to imagine

(anonymous, Central Alberta)



(Jaclyn, she/her, Red Deer)

 @jbell32

**Thank you for reading
AROMANTICISM:
a community zine, published
by the Society of Alberta
Asexuals and Aromantics.**

**SAAA is the only registered society
in Canada that caters to the needs of
asexual and aromantic folks.**

**Our mission is to create safe social
spaces, provide public education,
and advocate across the province
for issues that disproportionately
impact our community.**

**With this Zine, we strive to
raise awareness about the lived
experiences of aro-spec folks in
Alberta through storytelling and
uplifting their voices.**



**Connect with us online at:
<https://abacesandaros.ca/>**