

# What is Split Attraction?

There's an unspoken assumption that sexual & romantic attraction are connected: people who identify as straight are assumed to only be attracted to the opposite gender, and likewise for people who identify as gay, bi, etc. But sexual & romantic attraction can be experienced separately, and some people identify themselves in both dimensions. For example, people who are asexual (little to no sexual attraction) are not necessarily aromantic (little to no romantic attraction) and vice versa.

The concept of Split Attraction makes two claims:

**Sexual & romantic attraction are not the same thing.** They are distinct feelings which can be experienced together or separately and may not always align.

**Sexual & romantic attraction are not the only types of attraction.** There are a range of attractions possible in daily life, which can be just as significant (or even more so) to a person's relationships and wellbeing as sexual & romantic attraction.

Types of attraction commonly recognized:

- **Sexual** - desire to engage in sexual activities.
- **Romantic** - desire to engage in romantic activities.
- **Platonic** - desire to be liked or form friendship.
- **Emotional** - desire to share emotional vulnerability.
- **Intellectual** - desire to connect intellectually & understand someone's brain.
- **Sensual** - desire for tactile interactions & sharing sensory experiences.
- **Aesthetic** - desire to appreciate someone's appearance/presentation.
- **Spiritual** - desire to connect spiritually through shared morals/values.
- Some people don't use all of these (e.g. Platonic and Emotional may be conflated). Some people recognize additional types of attraction. This is just a sample!

Mythbusting:

*"Split Attraction is new/just a trend."* Actually, it's been discussed since at least 1879, when Karl Heinrich Ulrichs published a book using the terms conjunctive (aligned) and disjunctive (not aligned) attraction.

*"It makes sexual attraction animalistic/only about sex."* This has unfortunately been done by some activists, but at SAAA, we recognize that everyone has their own understanding of what sex means and whether it overlaps with other attractions.

*"It's only for asexuals & aromantics."* Not at all! Exploring how your attraction manifests can be beneficial regardless of your identity. This is why we created a worksheet. You can even do it as a group activity or with a partner to start conversations about interests, goals, and boundaries in your relationship.

*"You're forcing it on me."* We provide tools for understanding; whether or not you use them is up to you. Even in the asexual & aromantic community, some people prefer not to separate sexual & romantic attraction and only use one label. That's valid! Your identity is your choice and should never be pushed or assumed by others.

