

Marvin is a man in his early twenties who is undergoing rehabilitation following a car accident. Things are progressing well physically, but he is frustrated that friends and family keep making innuendos about how he'll be back to normal soon, implying that this will mean he'll be able to have sex again. He says he's never really felt sexual and wishes they'd shut up about it because it makes him feel bad.

Think about:

- What is your formulation/understanding of the key issues for Marvin?
- What assumptions might you have about Marvin's sexuality on the basis of this information?
- Do you have any prior assumptions about how the accident may be affecting him?
- How would you proceed?

As we saw in the previous section it is important not to reduce not experiencing sexual attraction directly to a clinical pathology. Rather the starting point with Marvin would be to ensure that any physiological difficulties (of any kind) have been ruled out and then to explore with him whether "feeling bad" is entirely due to the pressure from others and whether he feels bad himself about not feeling sexual.

Assuming his physiology is fine and Marvin is indeed asexual (or whatever term he prefers) it would be important to check out what sex means to Marvin – rather than assuming that his understanding will match your own definition – and how he feels about this. If Marvin is asexual, sex could mean anything from all forms of physical contact to genital penetration. Feelings around it could be anything from disgust to varying degrees of pleasure.

It is important to remember that not feeling sexual will not necessarily mean that Marvin won't want a partner or partners. You could explore whether or not he has one or wants one in future (without assuming that they will necessarily be asexual too or be of a specific gender).

It would be worthwhile spending time normalising the experience for Marvin by raising his awareness of the existence of asexual identities and communities if he is not already aware of this possibility. If he expresses an interest, you might provide information and explore the potential losses and gains of such an identity for him.

Finally, it would be helpful to keep in mind possible intersections between Marvin's not feeling sexual and other aspects of his identity and background. Men are often assumed to be naturally highly sexual, so Marvin may be worried about questions about his masculinity as well as his sexuality. Other intersections with race, culture, age, etc. should also be explored.