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Living OUT BY SALLY SHEKLOW

Missing Out

Think of the suffering.

Sometimes I poke fun at straight people. I apologize. Forgive me for heckling folks who can't help being the way they are. Unlike Republicans, fundamentalists, and SUV drivers – who are free to choose a different persuasion if they want to – heterosexuals are pretty much stuck being heterosexual.

They're born that way. Despite abounding opportunities to leave their lifestyle, most hets never turn gay. Not for very long anyway. Obviously, it's not a choice.

Straight people say they've known they were heterosexual since they were kids. Where they get the idea is anybody's guess. Maybe instead of a Midge doll, their Barbie had a Ken.

Psychiatrists say heterosexuals can become fine, well-adjusted adults who contribute to society, if they learn to accept themselves. Many develop a healthy sense of humor about their sexual orientation. The rest, well, what can you do but feel sorry for them?



Hets deserve acceptance the same as anyone else. After all, straightness is one of nature's myriad variations

It's too bad there's no special recognition for straight people. When they discover they're straight, who cares? There's no coming out, nobody to confide in, no one to make a big deal of it. No *Het Pride* parade.

Boy-girl oriented kids lose out on so much. Pity the poor children who are never allowed sleepovers with their closest friend just because that child is a different sex. Kids are separated by gender in gym class, Brownies, Cub Scouts. Sure, boys and girls can play some sports together, but that all changes when they grow up. They'll never play on the same pro basketball team.

Dating outside their gender must be hell. How awful to worry about birth control every time they have sex. There's so much straight couples can't share together, not the least of which is using the same restroom. Where do het couples go for a private chat in a public place?

If they want to work out or go for a swim, they're relegated to different locker rooms. If they go clothes shopping with their sweetie, they can't share a dressing room. That's lonely.

Even during their together time, can they really know each other's personal woes? How isolating to never fully understand what your partner's going through with menstrual cramps or jock itch, menopause or male-pattern baldness.

Plus straight couples face all those family expectations. Like getting married. Sure they can live together like any gay couple, but the marriage option is always hanging over them like the sword of Damocles.

Even the ones who willingly choose to wed don't have it easy. They're strapped with the ordeal of trudging off to the courthouse and shelling out good money for a license. It must be creepy to have the state all up in your personal business like that. Same-sex couples can't understand the burden except in Massachusetts, Canada, and a few Western European countries.

Think of the suffering inside straight relationships. One person is expected to fix stuff and earn more money and the other is expected to cook and clean and nurture. The teasing can be merciless on the ones who deviate (aka *girlriemen* and *ball-busters*). And during holidays, how they must agonize over both families vying for their company. Queer people shouldn't gloat over having neither family want us to visit. There's no call for arrogance.

Sooner or later, hetero couples are expected to reproduce. How embarrassing is that? Most of them never get to peruse sperm-donor catalogs and select the traits they want for their baby – they take their chances. If they do have kids, only one partner is expected to be the primary parent. If they're both nurturing and equally involved, people look at them funny. That's gotta be tough.

I'm doing my best to be more understanding, more tolerant of heterosexuals. I'm sorry if I've offended. Hets deserve acceptance the same as anyone else. After all, straightness is one of nature's myriad variations. Besides, you never know when someone in your family might turn out that way.

Sally Sheklow's Living Out column celebrates its sixth birthday in EW this issue. Kudos and kvetches welcome at sally@wypmprov.com.