

GETTING BI

A GUIDE TO BISEXUALITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

BY THE LJUBLJANA BISEXUAL COMMUNITY



Getting Bi
A Guide to Bisexuality in the 21st Century

This guide was created by the Ljubljana bisexual community in the frame of Društvo Kwartir's bi meet ups. Original Slovene printing: *Kaj bi z biseksualnostjo?* English translation by Verity Ritchie.

Kwartir.org

This project was supported by the FRIDA The Young Feminist Fund and the City of Ljubljana.

Ljubljana, 2018
first printing



Mestna občina
Ljubljana



1. DEFINITION AND INTRODUCTION

"I like people...I like them a lot..."

Bisexuality can be defined as the romantic and/or sexual attraction to all genders.

Bisexuality is...

"...a very important part of my life, because it's not just my sexual orientation, but also my community, my social life, my values and how I see the world."

"...an important part of my identity, and an even bigger part of my life, mainly because of the community, which is also my favourite thing about bisexuality - in my experience, bisexuals are some of the most open minded people."

"...real. And wonderful. And fun. A natural state of being. A part of who I am"

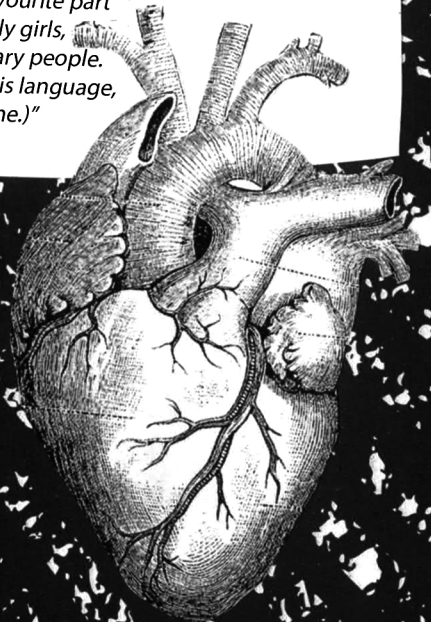
"...the largest part of the LGBT+ community, but sadly the most overlooked - this needs to change!"

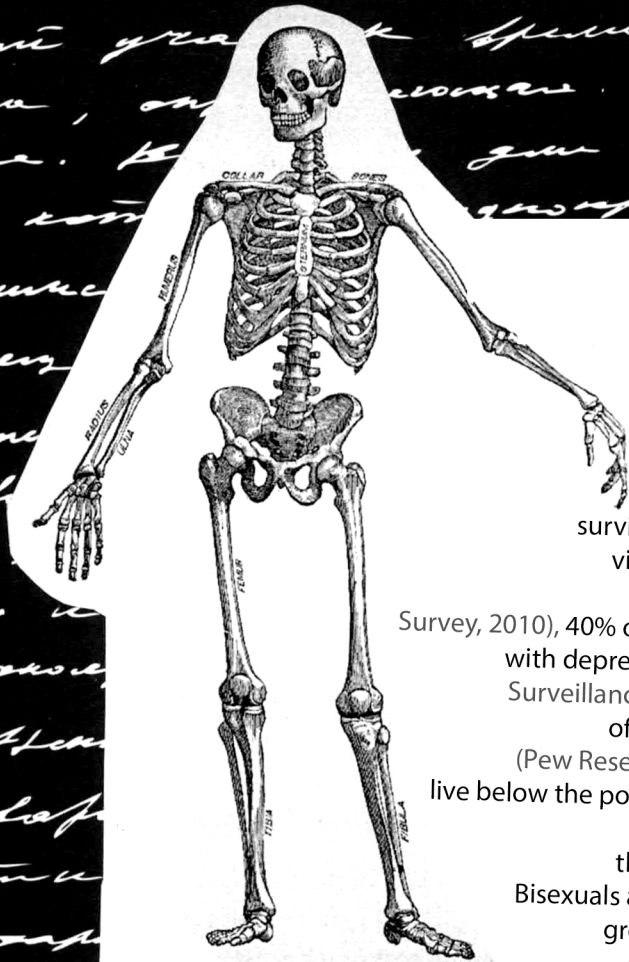
"...amazing."

"...answering "yes" to a multiple choice question."

"...potentially anyone, even your parents."

"...great. To me it is to be loving everyone. It is an important part of identity, because I work very hard to be me. My favourite part of bisexuality is to kiss lovely girls, lovely boys, and lovely nonbinary people. (I am not so good at speaking this language, I hope you understand me.)"





2. BIPHOBIA

Bisexuals make up the largest sexual orientation in the LGBT+ community, but are also the most vulnerable.

74.9% of bisexual women are survivors of sexual or intimate partner violence (National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 2010), 40% of bisexuals have been diagnosed with depression (CDC Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2015), 71% are not out of the closet to those closest to us (Pew Research Center, 2015) and 41% of us live below the poverty line. (Rice University, 2015). Each of these numbers is higher than for other sexual orientations. Bisexuals are the second most hated social group after intravenous drug users (Heterosexuals' Attitudes Toward Bisexual Men and Women in the United States, 2002).

Because bisexuality puts into question the black-and-white binary concepts of gender, people prefer to pretend that it doesn't exist, and that it's only a phase for those seeking attention. People often have trouble understanding that bisexuality is defined simply by attraction to different genders, not by experience.

Biphobia, in large part, stems from sexism, because people only take bi attraction to men seriously (bisexual men are seen as truly gay, bisexual women as straight). Therefore bisexuals face intolerance not only from straight people, but also gay and lesbian communities, making it difficult to find accepting environments.

"When I was a teenager, I really struggled with internalised biphobia, what seems to be a universal experience; Am I really bi? Is this just a phase? In high school, there were very negative attitudes towards bisexuals. We were seen as promiscuous, fakes, desperately seeking attention. Because of the stigma, I just didn't want to admit that I was attracted to women."

"People see bisexuality as fickle and they find that threatening. I've had friends make comments like, "If you're bi, that means I'm in danger, and so is my girlfriend."

"I kept quiet for years. I looked for community online, but hid the truth from my family. Biphobia keeps us in the closet."

"I never know if I am able to come out at work, and what will happen if I come out? Also sometimes I have internalised biphobia and think I am straight or lesbian.

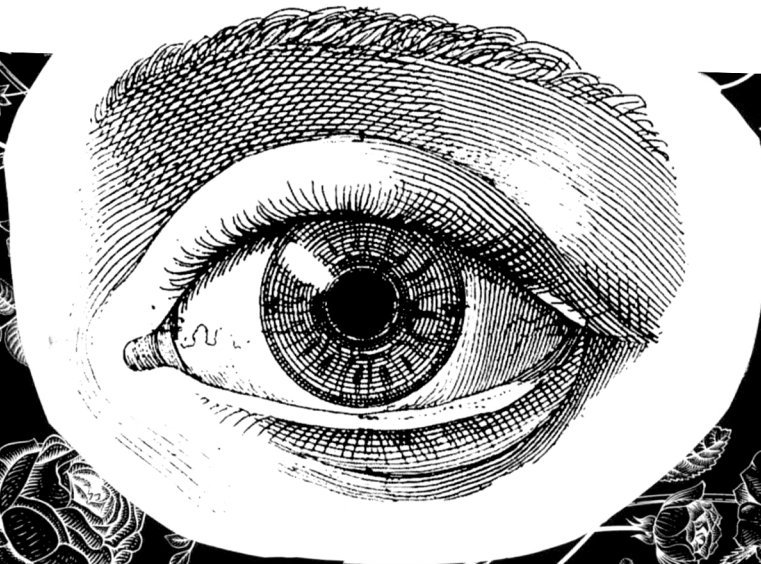
This is stupid.
I am bisexual queen."

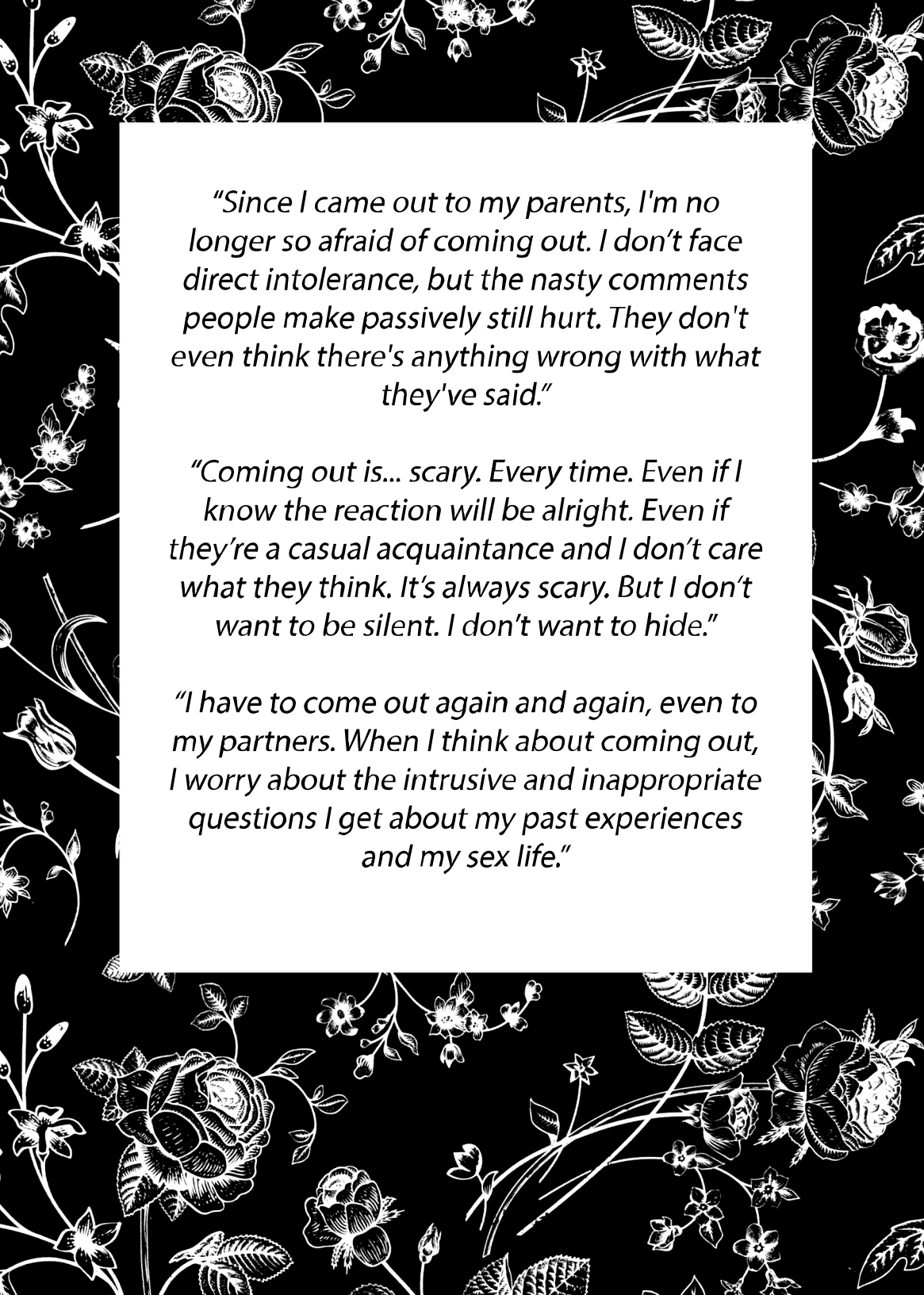


3. COMING OUT

Coming out is the process of sharing your sexual orientation with others. This is an important part of life for LGBT+ people, and a difficult one, as we never know what to expect from family, friends, schoolmates, in the workplace, or in other aspects of life. It's not just a one-time thing either; life is constantly presenting us with new situations with different potential consequences for us to navigate.

Coming out is especially difficult for bisexuals because we can't come out indirectly (e.g. by mentioning you have a boyfriend or girlfriend). At the same time, people will often disregard our coming out, deciding (e.g. based on the gender of our partners) that we're actually gay or straight.





"Since I came out to my parents, I'm no longer so afraid of coming out. I don't face direct intolerance, but the nasty comments people make passively still hurt. They don't even think there's anything wrong with what they've said."

"Coming out is... scary. Every time. Even if I know the reaction will be alright. Even if they're a casual acquaintance and I don't care what they think. It's always scary. But I don't want to be silent. I don't want to hide."

"I have to come out again and again, even to my partners. When I think about coming out, I worry about the intrusive and inappropriate questions I get about my past experiences and my sex life."

4. WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT BIPHOBIA?

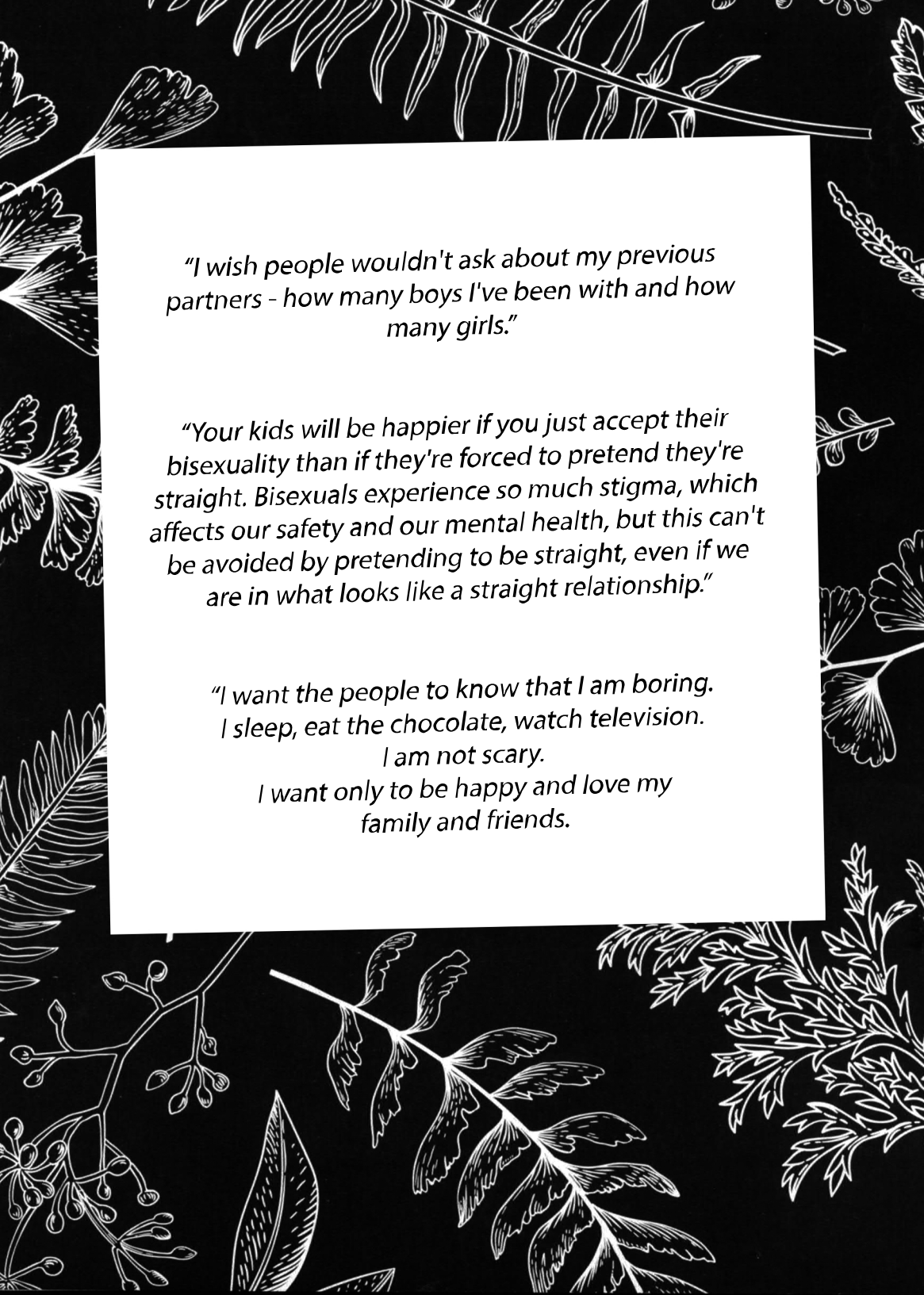
Talk about it. We can't pretend that bisexuality doesn't exist, that the whole world is straight or gay. Bisexuality is part of everyday life, and bisexuals make up a hell of a lot of people on this planet. We will not pretend we're some dirty little secret, not be spoken of in polite society.

When we talk about LGBT+ people, we must not forget the "B". Bisexuals are part of the community. We are here and we're queer, and we don't need to prove ourselves to anyone.

Don't sexualise bi people! We're not exotic toys, we're not your experiments or fetishes.

Our sexuality doesn't make us bad or untrustworthy partners. Your jealousy comes from your own insecurities, not from our orientations.





"I wish people wouldn't ask about my previous partners - how many boys I've been with and how many girls."

"Your kids will be happier if you just accept their bisexuality than if they're forced to pretend they're straight. Bisexuals experience so much stigma, which affects our safety and our mental health, but this can't be avoided by pretending to be straight, even if we are in what looks like a straight relationship."

*"I want the people to know that I am boring.
I sleep, eat the chocolate, watch television.
I am not scary.
I want only to be happy and love my
family and friends."*

5. WORDS OF WISDOM FROM BISEXUAL ELDERS

"Welcome! You're not the only bisexual out there, we are many! If you're not yet sure if you're bi, you're still welcome in our community. There's no better feeling than being among those who accept you just as you are."

"Your identity is important and the problems you face are real. There's no need to apologise for yourself, nor defend, nor hide. You're no less a part of the LGBT community than lesbian and gay people."

*"You're not half straight and half gay:
You're 100% bi!"*

"Join the community. Create your own community. You're not alone in the world, you're not the only person who feels this way, so don't let the heterosexual world leave you without support. Find bisexual friends, people around whom you don't have to censor any part of yourself."

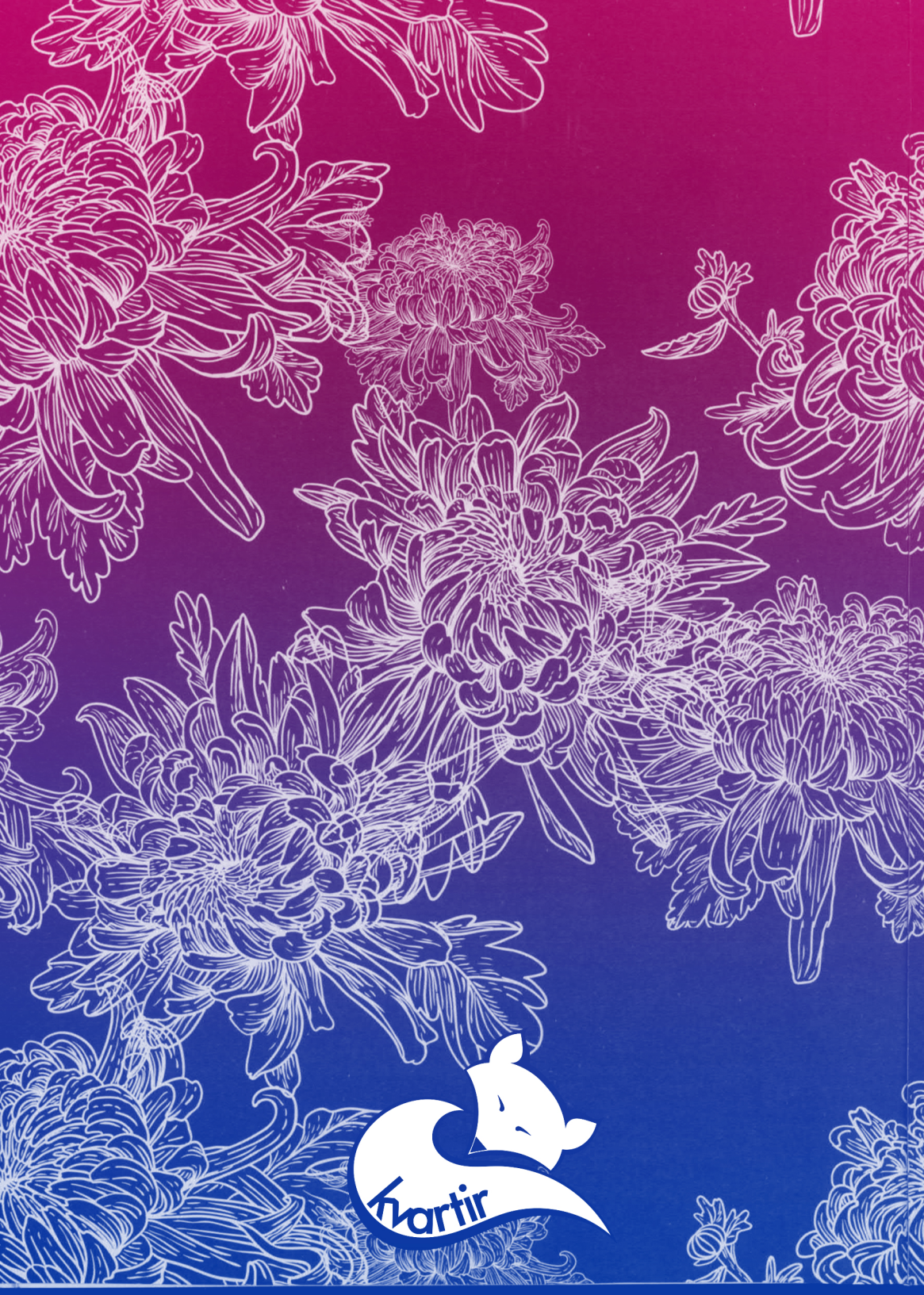
"If you think you might be bi, you probably are!"

"You don't have to prove your sexual orientation. If you're attracted to more than one gender, you are 'bi enough' regardless of what you've experienced."

"Bisexuality is a spectrum, You don't need to experience equal attraction to each gender or even in the same way to be bi. You can be bisexual even if you only experience sexual or romantic attraction to some and not others."

"You don't have to keep the same label forever; sexual orientation is fluid, and that's okay."

"Bisexuals, you are cool. You see world with special eyes. You have community. Come. It is cool. We are everywhere. In Slovenia. In the sky. In the sea. We are mermaids. We are unicorns. It is true. I have a horn."



Kartir