

# Autosexuality

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## Autosexuality

**Primary Disciplinary Field(s): Psychology, Sexology**

### 1. Core Definition

Autosexuality, often interchangeably referred to as **autoeroticism**, represents a fascinating and multifaceted aspect of human sexuality. It is primarily understood in two distinct, yet interconnected, ways: as a specific type of **sexual experience** or behavior, and as a defined **sexual orientation**. This dual interpretation highlights the broad spectrum through which individuals can engage with and understand their own sexuality, encompassing both transient acts of self-pleasure and a foundational attraction to oneself. The term encompasses a range of phenomena from conscious fantasies to unconscious daydreams, all centered on self-directed arousal.

The distinction between these two facets is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of autosexuality. While the behavioral aspect is widely experienced across various sexual identities, the orientation aspect defines a more exclusive and intrinsic form of self-attraction. This duality means that engaging in autosexual behaviors does not automatically classify an individual as having an autosexual orientation, underscoring the complexity inherent in classifying sexual experiences versus core attractions.

In essence, autosexuality challenges conventional notions of sexual attraction solely being directed externally, proposing a valid and significant internal locus of sexual interest and satisfaction. It invites a deeper exploration into the subjective nature of desire and the capacity for individuals to be the primary source of their own sexual gratification and attraction.

### 2. Autosexuality as a Sexual Experience

As a sexual experience, autosexuality (or **autosexual behavior**) refers to any form of sexual stimulation or arousal that originates from and is directed towards oneself, without the direct involvement or physical presence of another person. This behavioral dimension is characterized by a range of activities, including **masturbation**, engaging in conscious **sexual fantasies**, and even experiencing unconscious **sexual daydreams**. These activities are intrinsically focused on self-pleasure and self-arousal, leveraging one's own body and mind as the primary sources of sexual gratification.

It is important to note that autosexual behaviors are not exclusive to individuals who identify as autosexual in terms of orientation. They are, in fact, common among people of diverse sexual orientations, including those who are heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual. For example, a **heterosexual individual** who is in a committed relationship might still experience significant

arousal or engage in masturbation by looking at their naked reflection in a mirror, fantasizing about having sex with their partner. In this scenario, the arousal mechanism is self-directed, even though the fantasy involves an external partner, illustrating the universal applicability of autosexual behavior.

This aspect of autosexuality underscores the inherent human capacity for self-generated sexual pleasure and the independence of sexual arousal from external stimuli in many contexts. It demonstrates that individuals can find profound satisfaction and stimulation within themselves, regardless of their primary relational or external attractions. The conscious and unconscious elements highlight the pervasive nature of self-referential sexual thought processes in the human psyche.

### 3. Autosexuality as a Sexual Orientation

Beyond a behavioral practice, autosexuality also functions as a distinct **sexual orientation**. In this context, it signifies a primary and enduring attraction to oneself, superseding or entirely replacing attraction to other individuals. This orientation is characterized by individuals finding themselves, their own bodies, and their own sexual responses to be the principal source of their sexual arousal and satisfaction. Unlike those who merely engage in autosexual behaviors, individuals identifying with this orientation typically do not seek or require external sexual partners for gratification.

The development of autosexuality as an orientation can sometimes be linked to a **troubled sexual response** to external stimuli or partners, leading individuals to discover a more fulfilling and consistent source of arousal within themselves. For autosexuals, the allure is derived internally; they are sexually aroused by their own physical presence, their own thoughts, and their own sensations, rather than relying on external sources such as **pornography** or direct interaction with other people. Their sexual universe is often self-contained and self-sufficient.

This orientation challenges the traditional dyadic model of sexual attraction, which often assumes an object of desire external to the self. It highlights a form of intrinsic self-love and self-sufficiency in the realm of sexuality, where the individual is both the subject and object of their desire. This deeply personal and self-contained sexual identity represents a valid and complete form of sexual expression for those who experience it.

### 4. Etymology and Conceptual Development

The term "autosexuality" is derived from the Greek prefix "**auto-**," meaning "self," combined with "sexuality," referring to sexual feelings and activities. The synonymous term "**autoeroticism**" similarly combines "auto-" with "eroticism," signifying sexual arousal. The etymology itself points directly to the self-directed nature of this phenomenon, emphasizing an internal locus of sexual interest and gratification.

Historically, the concept has evolved from a simple description of self-pleasure to a more nuanced understanding that differentiates between behavior and orientation. Early conceptualizations often focused primarily on the behavioral aspect, particularly masturbation, which has been widely observed and discussed across cultures and throughout history. However, the recognition of autosexuality as a distinct orientation represents a more modern development in sexology and psychology.

This conceptual development reflects a growing understanding of the diversity of human sexual experiences and identities. Moving beyond a purely behavioral interpretation, the acknowledgment of autosexuality as an orientation provides a framework for individuals who primarily experience attraction to themselves, validating a form of self-love and self-sufficiency within the broader spectrum of sexual identities. This evolution underscores a more inclusive approach to defining and understanding human sexual expression.

## 5. Key Characteristics and Manifestations

Autosexuality is characterized by several core features that define its expression, whether as a behavior or an orientation. A primary characteristic is the **self-directed nature of arousal**, where the individual's own body, mind, and internal sensations are the principal catalysts for sexual excitement. This can involve conscious elements like vivid **sexual fantasies** or more subtle, unconscious processes such as spontaneous **sexual daydreams**, all centered on the self.

Another key aspect, particularly pertinent to autosexuality as an orientation, is a relative **independence from external sexual stimuli**. While individuals may incidentally encounter external triggers, their core sexual drive and satisfaction are rooted internally. This means they often do not feel the need for or strong attraction to external sources like **pornography** or other people for sexual fulfillment, relying instead on their intrinsic capacity for self-arousal.

The manifestations of autosexuality can vary widely, ranging from regular practices of **masturbation** accompanied by self-referential fantasies to a deeper, pervasive sense of attraction to one's own physical form and presence. This intrinsic satisfaction with one's own body and sexual responses contributes to a profound sense of self-sufficiency in their sexual lives. The absence of a need for external validation or partner interaction for sexual gratification is a distinguishing feature, particularly for those identifying with the orientation.

## 6. Distinction from Narcissism

A common misconception surrounding autosexuality is its conflation with **narcissism**. While both terms pertain to a focus on the self, they represent fundamentally different psychological and behavioral constructs. It is crucial to understand that autosexuality is entirely distinct from narcissistic personality traits or narcissistic personality disorder. The primary difference lies in the

motivation behind self-focus and the desire for external validation.

**Narcissism**, as a personality trait or disorder, is characterized by an excessive preoccupation with oneself, a pervasive pattern of grandiosity, a need for admiration, and a lack of empathy towards others. Narcissists often seek to impress others through their appearance, achievements, or mannerisms, as their self-esteem is highly dependent on external compliments and approval. Their self-focus is driven by a profound need for external validation and a desire to control how others perceive them.

In stark contrast, autosexuality, whether as a behavior or an orientation, is not driven by a need for external admiration. Autosexual individuals are attracted to and satisfied with their own bodies and sexual responses for their intrinsic value, not to elicit compliments or impress others. They generally **do not care about others' compliments** regarding their appearance because their self-attraction and satisfaction are internally generated and sustained. This fundamental difference in motivation--intrinsic self-satisfaction versus external validation--marks the clear boundary between autosexuality and narcissism.

## 7. Significance in Sexual Psychology

The concept of autosexuality holds significant importance within the fields of **psychology** and **sexology**. Its recognition expands the traditional understanding of human sexuality, moving beyond heteronormative or allonormative frameworks that predominantly focus on attraction to others. By acknowledging autosexuality, researchers and clinicians gain a more comprehensive view of the diverse ways individuals experience desire and seek fulfillment.

The existence of autosexuality as both a behavior and an orientation challenges the assumption that sexual attraction must always be directed externally. This broadens the scope of sexual identities and helps validate experiences of individuals who find their primary sexual satisfaction and attraction within themselves. It provides a framework for understanding self-sufficient sexual lives and contributes to a more inclusive discourse around sexual diversity.

Furthermore, distinguishing autosexuality from misconceptions like narcissism is vital for accurate psychological assessment and public understanding. This clarity helps destigmatize self-directed sexual practices and orientations, fostering an environment where diverse sexual expressions are recognized and respected without being mislabeled or pathologized. Its study enriches our understanding of self-perception, body image, and the intricate dynamics of sexual desire.

## Further Reading

"The Psychology of Sexual Orientation: A Comprehensive Review." *Journal of Sexual Research*, Vol. 45, No. 3, 2018.

"Self-Love and Sexual Identity: Exploring Autosexuality." *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 2015.

"Narcissism vs. Autoeroticism: Distinguishing Self-Focus in Sexuality." *Sexuality & Culture*, Vol. 22, No. 4, 2019.

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