

Promiscuity

By Alan Bennett Ilagan

Once upon a time I was a raging slut. I did it anywhere, anytime, and pretty much with anyone. At the height of my whoredom I bedded three guys in one afternoon ~ separately of course, but still. There was a steady stream of sex partners, and I reveled in the freedom to have at it at will. That's not to say it was some glorious Bacchanalian feast of flesh all the time, and there were some definite moments of loneliness, but they had less to do with promiscuity and more of my own emotional crap. Would I be happy continuing along this vein indefinitely? Probably not, but that's my own personal preference.

My time as a slut was rather short-lived. It was a small period of my life, but one that has become a rite of passage for many gay men. What happens when this is extended for longer than a "short period"? What if being a slut becomes a way of life that lingers long after one starts to lose one's hair or develops a healthy paunch? Is it such a bad thing to live life promiscuously if done with the proper safety precautions required in this day and age?

It's always been somewhat assumed that gay men have more sex than virtually anyone else, and that there's only a small minority who maintain strictly monogamous relationships. Gay promiscuity has been both celebrated and reviled, and in each case the opposition falls victim to close-minded standards with little-to-no room for variation or exception, and an inexplicable need to definitively categorize and label people. Such views also suffer from a dangerous refusal to allow for lifestyle choices that differ from one's own beliefs.

Most of us are fully aware of the hazards and danger involved in sexual promiscuity today, and there is no denying that there is an elevated risk that rises as the number of sexual partners increases. But if someone actively makes the choice to have excessive sex with numerous partners, and goes about it in the safest possible way, is that detrimental to one's psychological well-being?

Some of us don't ever want to be married or in a monogamous relationship. Is this a fault, or is it merely deemed one by society and many generations of marriage-based tradition? There is an onerous historical expectation that men are supposed to get married, settle down, and have a family. Granted, it's always been a straight man's role, but that sort of thinking has been passed on to a lot of gay men, as evidenced by our fight for gay marriage and the growing number of us who are adopting children and creating families. Now, I am all for gay marriage for those who want to take the plunge, but I don't believe it should be forced or even encouraged upon anyone ~ and the same thing goes for promiscuity.

If promiscuity is indeed one's choice, who's to say that there is anything psychologically damaging about it? It may be true for a few, but to assume that everyone is going to be emotionally harmed is not fair to those who find their contentment and fulfillment in screwing around a lot. Adults have the responsibility to take care of themselves and not fall prey to peer pressure or the stereotypical view of gay men as sex-excessive. Sometimes it's not entirely bad to have a regular line-up of sexual soldiers ready to serve. Before we send the troops into battle, however, it may not necessarily be the smartest thing to glorify or re-enforce the notion that gay men are promiscuous. Certainly there are physical dangers that go along with the lifestyle ~ that's a simple fact, and there may be deeper risks involved.

I know many older men who were quite slutty when they were younger, and they are usually the biggest proponents for a promiscuous lifestyle. Yet all these men either have long-term relationships or trick only occasionally. They love their memories of a sex-crazed past, they love to advocate the actions of a sex-crazed present, but few actually live out the lifestyle. Maybe they'd like to, but their bodies have matured or their hair has fallen out or they simply can't be bothered to get it up as often. Or maybe they just grew tired of it. Let's face it, gay men rarely have a problem finding a ready and steady stream of willing sex partners, but holding onto one exceptional man is a different story.

The risk of losing that one special guy in the name of free love is one darker aspect to being promiscuous. How many of us will put up with that kind of bed-hopping done by someone we really love? As much as we'd like to think we aren't the jealous type and that we can rise above such concerns, those are abstract theories, and the blunt reality is a cut far more cruel.

There are some men who will proclaim to their death that they will never settle down, and that the structure and conditioning of straight society is what reins us in unnaturally. But I've looked into their eyes as well, and more often than not they are sunken with a weary loneliness, a hollow vacancy missing from most people who have never known love longer than a few one-night-stands and a couple of repeat trysts.

There will always be bitter queens who decry a promiscuous lifestyle or look back on their own with regret and disdain, and others who celebrate having as much sex as possible. Ultimately it is in the hands of the individual. To judge or find fault with someone for being promiscuous is an underestimation of that person's intelligence and understanding, along with a general downgrading of gay men's capability as a whole. Adults generally have a say in how they behave and what they choose to do in and out of the bedroom/bathroom stall/etc.

In the end, thinking individuals should know enough about themselves to realize what works best for them, and that it's never going to be exactly the same for any two people. To lay down the law and claim there is a definitive right and wrong way to have sex, even if it's not by exact numbers or statistics, is extremely dangerous given today's conservative climate. So for those who are monogamous and committed to one person ~ good for you. And for those of you who are sluts and loving every minute of it ~ live it up.