



Aromantic Competent Care

Unlearning amatonormativity in therapeutic practices



Outline

Land Acknowledgment
Introductions
Aromanticism 101
Aromantic mental health care
Amatonormativity
Applications in therapeutic practice
Closing statements

Aromantic

someone who experiences little to no romantic attraction

A Venn diagram consisting of two overlapping circles. The left circle is light purple and labeled "ASEXUAL". The right circle is olive green and labeled "AROMANTIC". The two circles overlap significantly in the center.

ASEXUAL

AROMANTIC



THE SPECTRUM

GREY(A)ROMANTIC

Someone who experiences romantic attraction rarely, not very strongly, or only in specific circumstances.

DEMIROMANTIC

Someone who only experiences romantic attraction after an emotional connection has been made.

ALLOROMANTIC

Someone who experiences romantic attraction and isn't on the aromantic spectrum.

ATTRACTION

SEXUAL ATTRACTION

A feeling of attraction to someone's physical appearance with a sexual component, or desire to touch someone sexually.

SENSUAL ATTRACTION

Attraction that involves a desire to touch or be physically close to someone, but not necessarily in a sexual way.



PLATONIC ATTRACTION

Desire for friendship or another close non-romantic relationship with someone. The platonic version of a crush is called a squish.

ALTEROUS ATTRACTION

Attraction that falls in the space between platonic and romantic.

AESTHETIC ATTRACTION

An interest or desire to look at someone and appreciate their appearance, but which isn't necessarily sexual or romantic.



RELATIONSHIPS

QUEERPLATONIC

A non-romantic relationship that rejects the common limits placed on platonic relationships in terms of their value and commitment.

NONAMORY

A lifestyle choice or relationship style that does not include intimate, long-term partnerships, whether romantic or platonic.

RELATIONSHIP ANARCHY

Relationship anarchy is an approach to relationships that's built from anarchist principles. Relationship anarchy works to oppose hierarchies in and between relationships and relationship types.

AROMANTIC MENTAL HEALTH

71%
experienced suicidal
thoughts

66%
alienated from friends and
family

72%
negatively impacted by
amatonormativity

Many aros are made to feel inferior, are told anti-aromantic prejudice isn't real and that they will change when they 'meet the right person'

<https://bit.ly/2QeBX47>
<https://bit.ly/3r5NWOB>



Aromantic concerns in receiving care

Being responsible for educating the therapist*

Having therapists treat their aromanticism as an issue that needs to be resolved

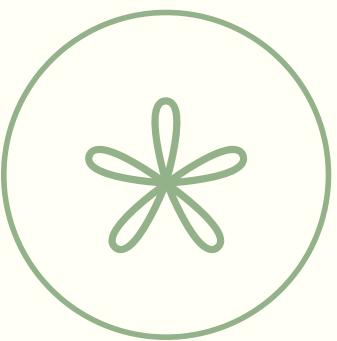
Fixating on their aromanticism when it isn't what they want to focus on

Treating romance as the end goal of treatment

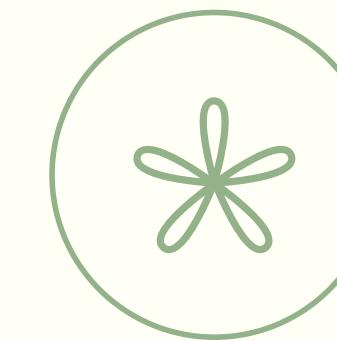
Being pathologized

Mentions of loneliness will be targeted with romance

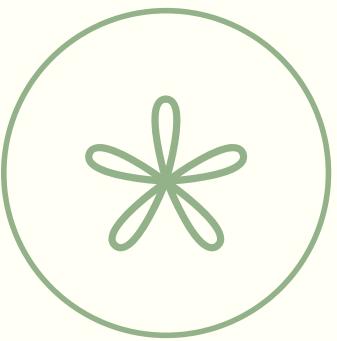
*Therapist refers generally to anyone who works in mental health care and has contact with or provides care to clients or patients in a clinical setting



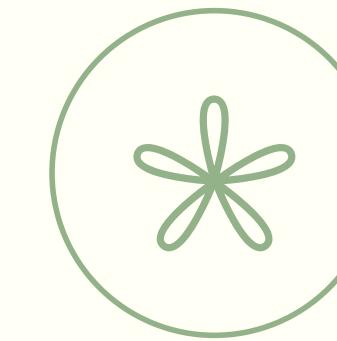
Aromanticism isn't an issue to be solved or cured. Our mental health and other issues can be connected to our aromanticism. But they are never caused by it.



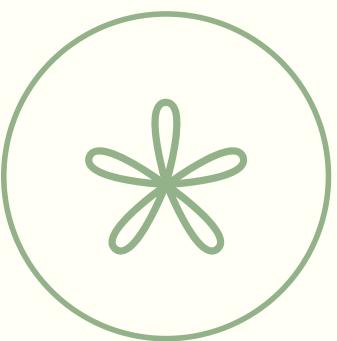
Don't fixate on your client's aromanticism. Let them guide you on how relevant or irrelevant their aromanticism is to a particular situation or concern



Feel free to ask your client questions about their aromanticism. But, remember that they are paying for you to help them not to teach you.



Clients may express a desire to be 'normal' and experience romance even if it isn't possible or good for them.



Trust your clients. They know their own experiences and will always have more insight into them than you.

Caring for aro clients



WHAT NOT TO SAY

Don't worry, you'll find someone
one day!

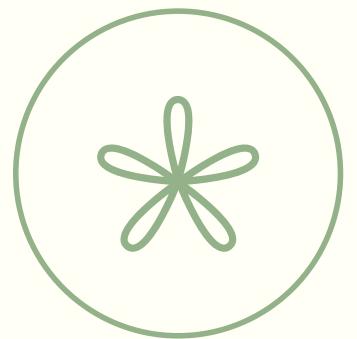
Your feelings will change as you
heal.

At least you don't have to worry about heartbreak or
relationships.

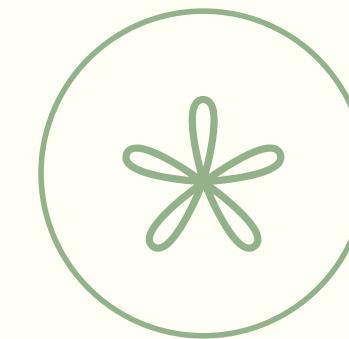
Oh, I'm so sorry.

Amatonormativity

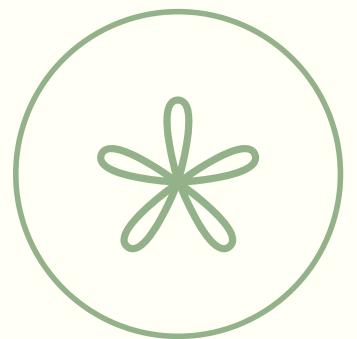
The assumptions that a central, exclusive, amorous relationship is normal for humans, in that it is a universally shared goal, and that such a relationship is normative, in that it should be aimed at in preference to other relationship types.



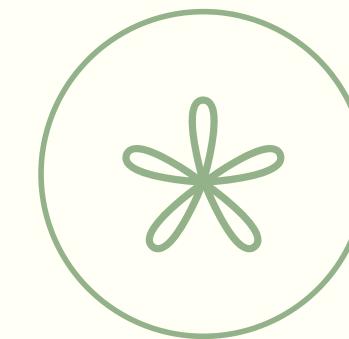
Therapists treating romance as inevitable.



Marriage or long-term partnership viewed as a sign of healthy functioning.

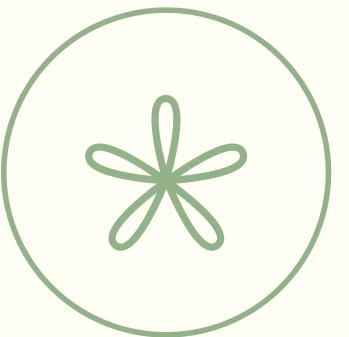


Seeing romantic relationships and interest as a universal marker of progress.

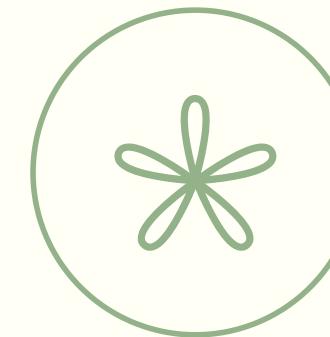


Lack of interest in romance being seen as an indicator of pathology.

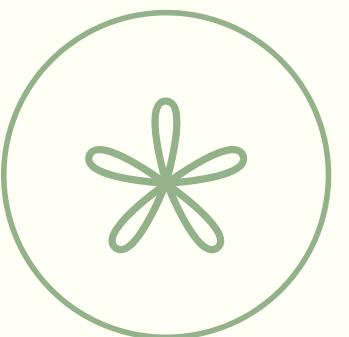
Amatonormativity in therapeutic practice



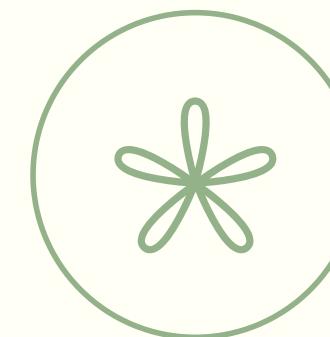
“[I’m concerned about] unintentionally perpetrating microaggressions, especially around assumptions that sexual and romantic attraction are normal/the default.” - Holly (Bisexual Cis Woman), Psychologist



“I think the tendency is to assume a priori that these clients are either Asperger’s or schizoid” - Debi Roelke, Ph.D. (Straight Woman), Psychologist/psychotherapist



“I’m sure I have parts of me that feel have bias. Maybe sad that they might be missing out on experiences that bring growth and challenge and change.” - Lisa Spiegel (Straight Woman), Psychotherapist

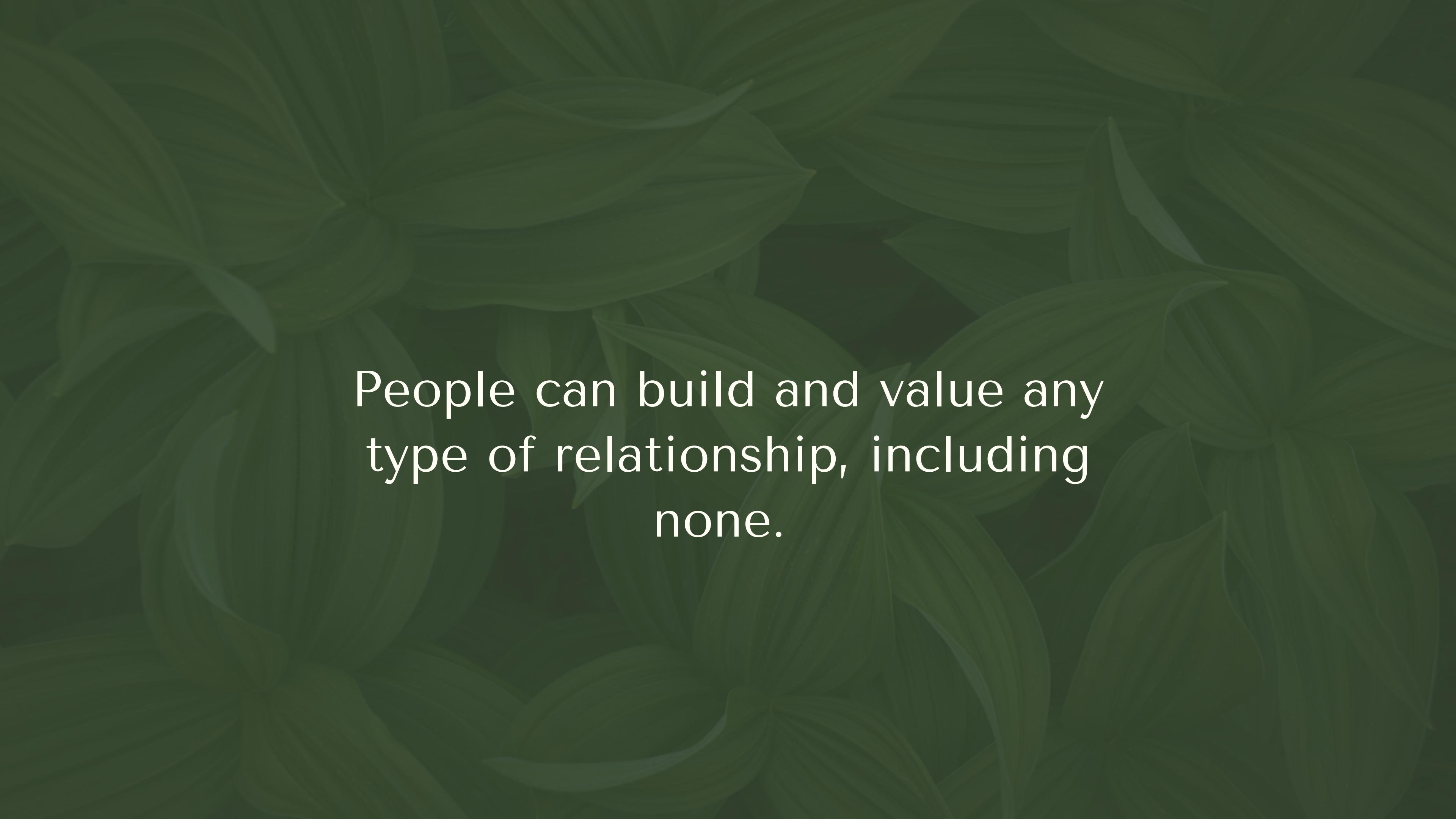


“In others, [I have noticed a] lack of understanding. Dismissiveness or pathologising. Especially where clients are also diagnosed with autism.” - Amy (Queer Gender Fluid Person), Therapist

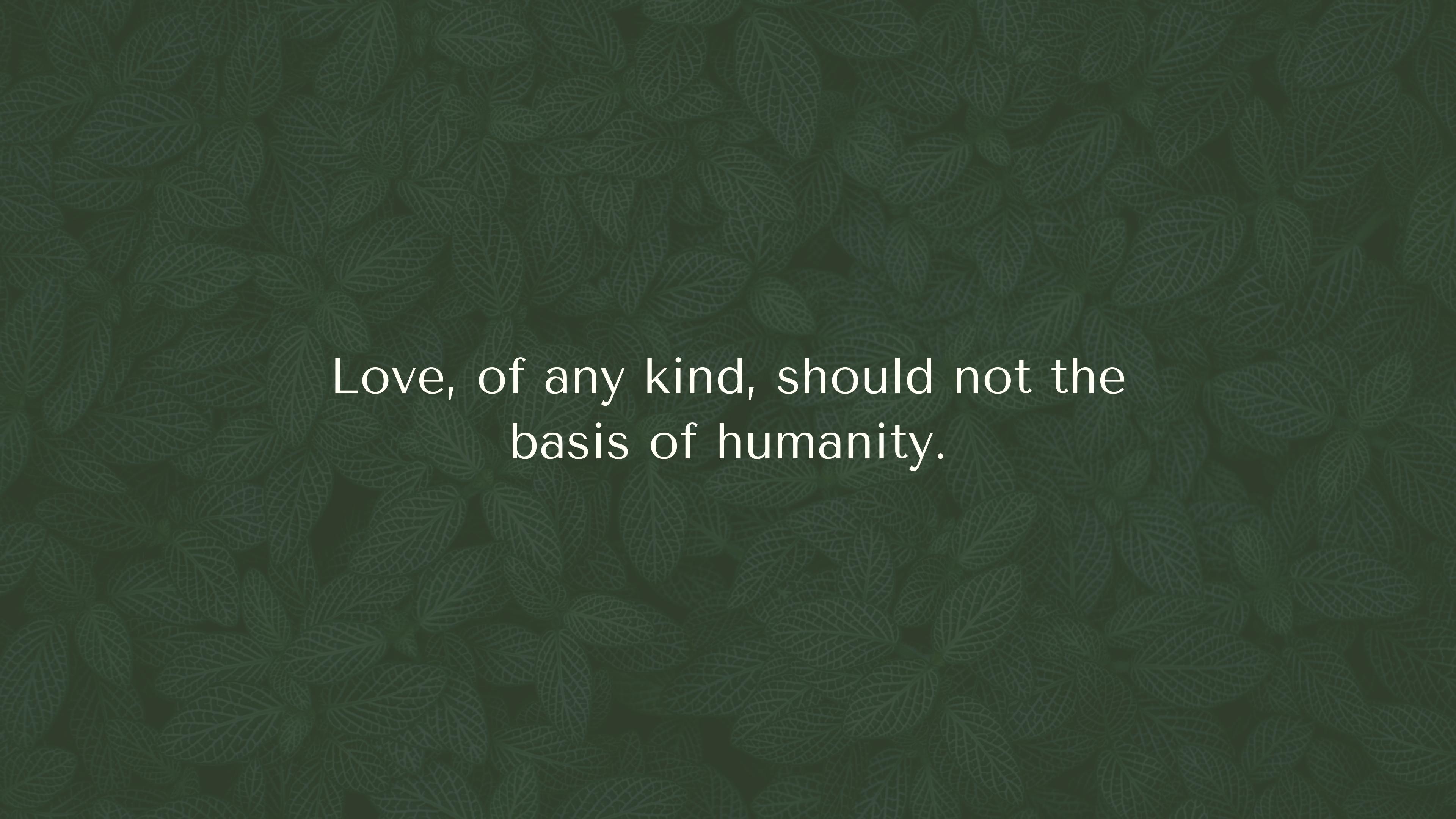
Statements from professionals



Aromanticism is not something to
be fixed.



People can build and value any type of relationship, including none.



Love, of any kind, should not the
basis of humanity.



LEARNING MORE



AROMANTICISM.ORG

AROMANTICGUIDE.COM

AROWORLDS.COM

AROSPECWEEK.ORG