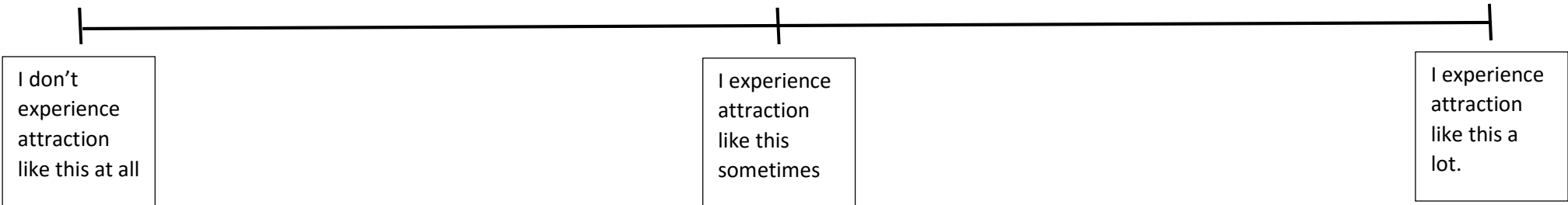


Limerence

From: “Love and Limerence”, Dorothy Tennov, 1979

Limerence enters your life pleasantly. Someone takes on a special meaning. It may be an old friend unexpectedly seen in a new way. Or it may be a new person, someone who only a week before, perhaps just yesterday, was unknown to you.

“Suddenly Dr. Ashton – Elena her name is – looked up and seemed startled to be the only leftover from the meeting. She flushed a bit and gathered her things saying she hoped she had not kept me. Then just before she went out, she looked at me and smiled! It was that look and that smile that started the whole thing off, and I still find the whole thing embarrassing to speak of; but I had this flash, this thrill, a running sensation of excitement, and I don’t even remember what I said. It was not, and I emphasize, it was not a matter of actually believing either now or then that she had *on that occasion* deliberately delayed her departure or had any romantic ideas of me. It was ridiculous to think anything at all, but the fact was that I felt strongly at the time, even that first time, that some spark of communication had passed between us and that it was communication of a very personal and delightful sort.”



Other thoughts...

Intimate Communion

Intimate Communion: Awakening Your Sexual Essence, David Deida, 1995

Note: this book is written in a very heteronormative way. But if we set that aside, does it have any wisdom for us?

Romance

Imagine that you are at a party and you meet a person of the opposite sex. The two of you begin a conversation and the rapport is instant. The talk seems effortless. You really enjoy being with this person and you feel really comfortable. In fact, the familiarity is startling. You look at this person and say, “It’s hard to believe that we just met a few minutes ago. I feel like I’ve known you for a long time.” ...

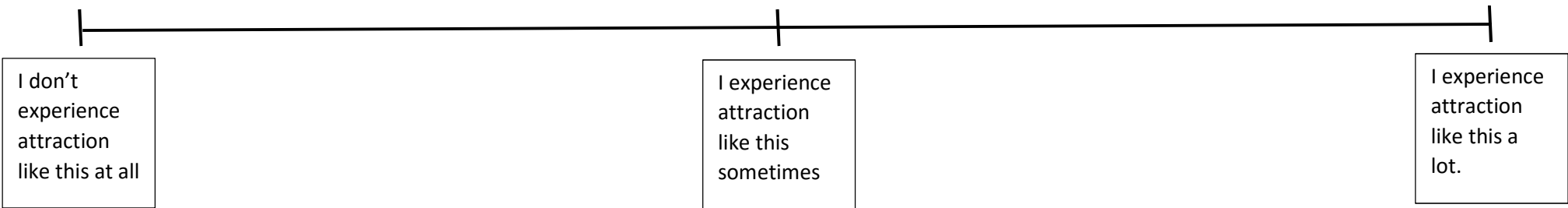
This is romantic attractive, infatuation, “falling in love”.

Romantic attraction begins with a strong feeling of oneness and of bonding, a feeling that you have “always known each other”. You have probably felt this way about some person at some point in your life. If you have, you know that the feeling doesn’t last. After several months, or if you are lucky, several years, the feeling of romantic attraction wears off.

Sexual Polarity

You are standing in the supermarket choosing tomatoes. You look up, straight into a very attractive stranger’s eyes, a stranger of the opposite sex. A jolt of electricity runs through you. Your eyes remain engaged a little longer, then you look down at the tomatoes. Your body is flush with energy and aliveness.

Sexual polarity – the magnetic pull or repulsion between the Masculine and Feminine – affects all our lives. A few moments of sexual polarity can cause the memory of your trip to the supermarket to linger in your mind for hours or even days. Total strangers can raise your body temperature, cause your face to blush, and make your heart pound.



Other thoughts...

How to make love revolutionary

By Josefin Hedlund, www.opendemocracy.net

Test yourself: write down the gender, race, class, social, political, educational, and geographical background of everyone you have been attracted to. Do you see a pattern?

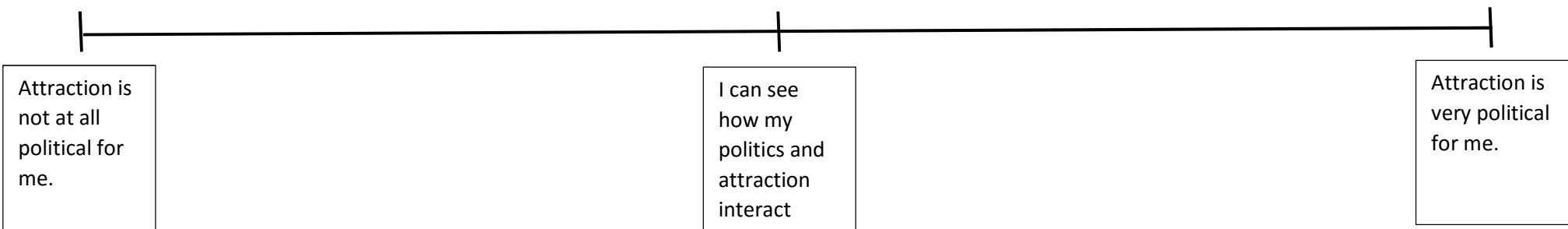
If you are only attracted to able, 'mentally well', successful (by society's standards), cisgender, normatively beautiful, slim people, from class privileged backgrounds, then you are also [upholding violent norms](#). This means that you cannot just declare that who you are attracted to is a personal preference.

9 Strategies For Non-Oppressive Polyamory

Posted on [October 4, 2013](#) by blackgirldangerous.org

Remember that polyamory doesn't make you radical all on its own, regardless of which directions your desire is oriented. We all have these preferences based on race, class, ability, gender, etc that need deep work and questioning. Dating 5 White cisgender people at once isn't necessarily a radical act.

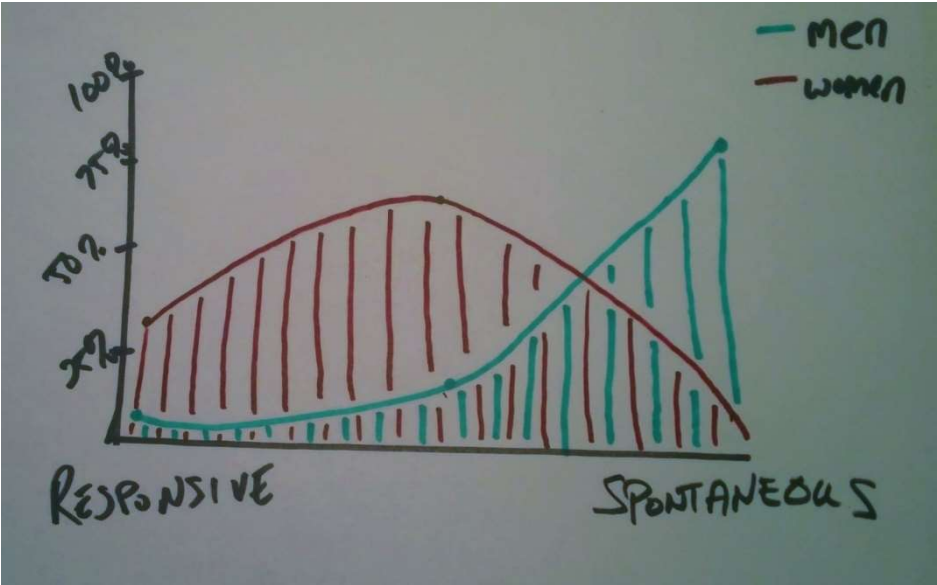
Question: Do you think your attraction is political?



Other thoughts...

Spontaneous vs Responsive Desire

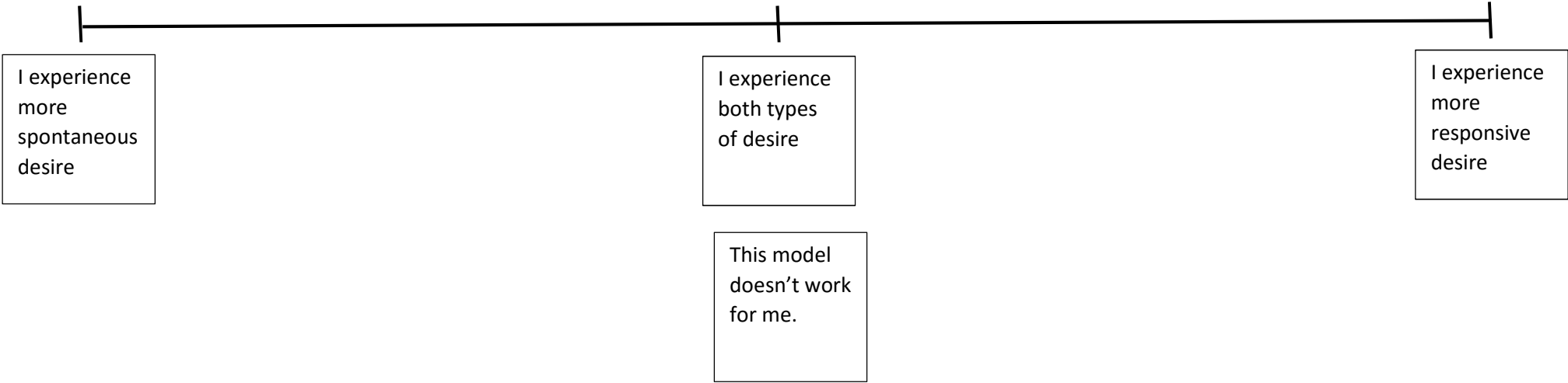
Emily Nagoski, www.thedirtynormal.com



“Spontaneous” desire is sexual desire that feels out of the blue, whereas responsive desire emerges once a person is in an erotic context. The mainstream cultural understanding of desire tends to be that it’s “spontaneous,” and I’ve been looking for a way to show that responsive desire is just as normal and healthy as spontaneous desire.

Well. I decided to draw a graph.

Spontaneous Desire	Responsive Desire
Sexual desire feels like it appears “spontaneously,” out of the blue	Sexual desire emerges only in an erotic context, after sexy things start happening.
May include more frequent desire for sex – multiple times per week	May include less frequent desire for sex – less than once a week in most contexts
May include desire in a wider range of contexts	May include more context-sensitive desire, preferring things to be “just right”
May feel like “too much” desire, in a negative context	May feel like “no desire,” in a context that hits the brakes



Other thoughts...

Security-based model of attraction

based on the relationship questionnaire devised by Bartholomew and Horowitz^[6] and on a review of studies by Pietromonaco and Barrett.^[7]

		Self-Esteem (thoughts about self)	
		Positive	Negative
Sociability (thoughts about others)	Positive	Secure	Anxious–preoccupied
	Negative	Dismissive–avoidant	Fearful–avoidant

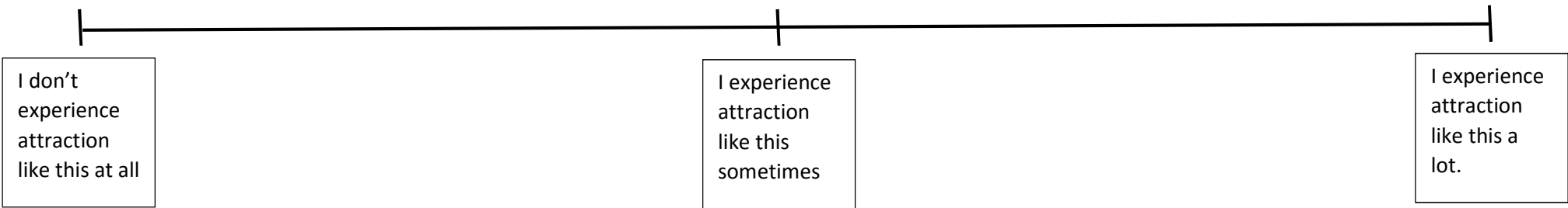
Securely attached people tend to agree with the following statements: "It is relatively easy for me to become emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on others and having others depend on me. I don't worry about being alone or others not accepting me."

People with **anxious-preoccupied attachment** tend to agree with the following statements: "I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others, but I often find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like", and "I am uncomfortable being without close relationships, but I sometimes worry that others don't value me as much as I value them."

People with a **dismissive-avoidant** attachment style tend to agree with these statements: "I am comfortable without close emotional relationships", "It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient", and "I prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on me." People with this attachment style desire a high level of independence.

People with **fearful-avoidant** attachment style tend to agree with the following statements: "I am somewhat uncomfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely, or to depend on them. I sometimes worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others."

Question: does this model reflect how you experience attraction?



Other thoughts...

Sparks and glows

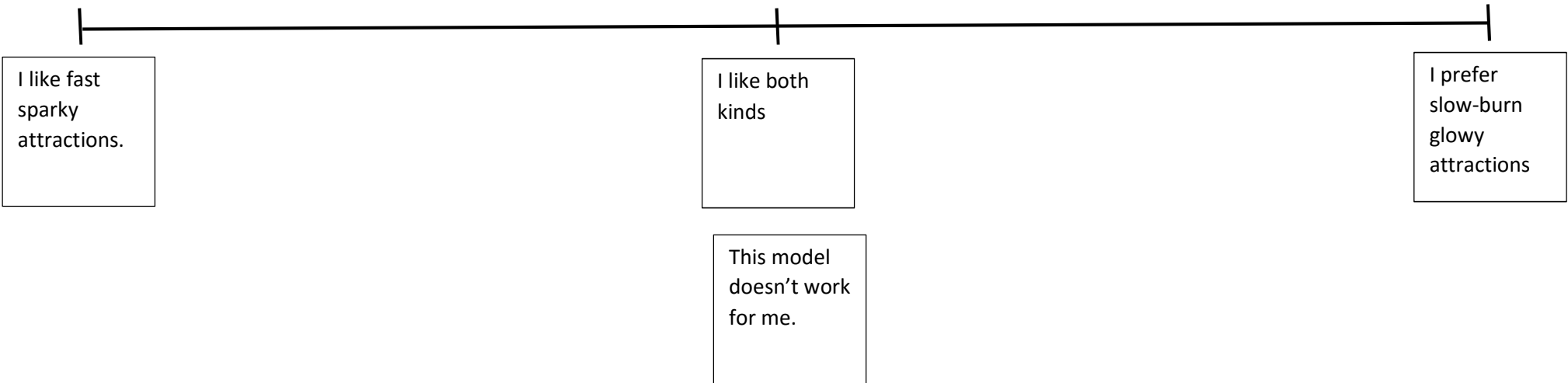
Me, reflecting on a conversation in Stanley Park.

When I feel a quick, sudden attraction to someone when I meet them first, it's like a spark. It's hot, and bright, but almost always it burns out really quickly. They don't feel real, so I don't try to catch them, or feed them – I just enjoy them and let them go.

But sometimes, and almost always without a spark preceding it, I'll discover a small ember of attraction glowing away. It's not hot, and bright and exciting like a spark, but it has a glow. When I find a glow, I'll breathe on it, and see if it grows. Some of them don't catch, and die out. Some glow when I breathe on them, but settle down to a dim red again. Just occasionally, one will catch, smoulder, and spread into a blaze that'll never go out.

Those are the fires I feed.

Question: Do you prefer to catch sparks, or feed embers?



Other thoughts...

Types of Attraction

Extracted from AVENwiki and asexuality.org

Note: There is currently no single accepted definition of sexual attraction.

Sexual Attraction - an emotional response that sexual people often feel that results in a desire for sexual contact with the person that the attraction is felt towards. *This can either be immediate or develop over time.*

Romantic Attraction - an emotional response that most people often feel that results in a desire for a romantic relationship with the person that the attraction is felt towards with little to no sexual aspect.

Sensual Attraction - an emotional or physical desire to engage in sensual acts with the person that the attraction is felt towards, particularly as an expression of affection. Sensuality is a pleasure that involves the senses, particularly tactile sensuality such as cuddling, kissing, or giving or receiving a massage. It is sometimes difficult to fully distinguish sensual things from sexual ones in a relationship, especially between sexual people. Sensual acts are distinguished from sexual acts only by the people engaged with them.

Aesthetic Attraction - Some report feeling an attraction to other people that is not connected to a desire to do anything with them, either sexually or romantically. They simply appreciate their appearance. This is called aesthetic attraction because it is thought to be similar to other aesthetic desires, such as the desire to keep listening to a good song or to keep looking at a beautiful sunset.

Sexual	
Romantic	
Sensual	
Aesthetic	

I don't experience attraction like this at all

I experience attraction like this sometimes

I experience attraction like this a lot.

Other thoughts?

Desire vs Attraction

Extracted from “Differentiating Sexual Attraction and Sexual Desire” By Coyote, theacetheist.wordpress.com

On the surface, attraction and desire would appear to be equivalent and interchangeable terms, especially for those who have only experienced the two simultaneously, but the assumption that follows — that they’re “basically the same thing” — only makes sense if you’re unaware of or have not considered the ways in which one can exist without the other.

Using a cuddle analogy...

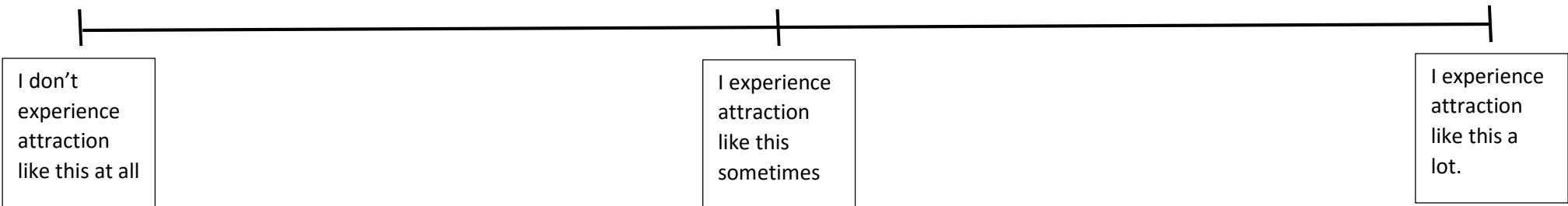
we can recognize the possibility of several different scenarios. For example:

- experiencing random sensual attraction to someone, but not caring to do anything about it
- feeling like you need a hug, and one of your friends happens to be around, so you ask them for a hug
- thinking someone looks really cuddly, but you also happen to hate their guts, so nothing comes of it
- wanting some physical affection and being willing to accept it even from people you find really unattractive

All of this can just as easily be applied to sexuality. The difference between sexual attraction and sexual desire, at its most basic, is cognitive. **Attractions are involuntary; desire is the degree of will directed toward action.**

This is not a trivial squabble over semantics. **The distinction between sexual attraction and sexual desire is important for anyone who is attracted to someone they don’t want to have sex with, as well as for anyone *not* attracted to people they *do* want to have sex with. if you treat them as synonymous, you’re neglecting to acknowledge the role of individual will and agency.**

Question: Can you identify attraction and desire as separate phenomena for you?



Other thoughts...

Stone

From <http://epochryphal.tumblr.com/>

stone: someone who strongly prefers to give (usually sexual) touch, but not receive it.

Definition of “stone butch” on About.com

A stone butch is a lesbian who gets her pleasure from pleasing her partner. She does not like to be touched sexually.

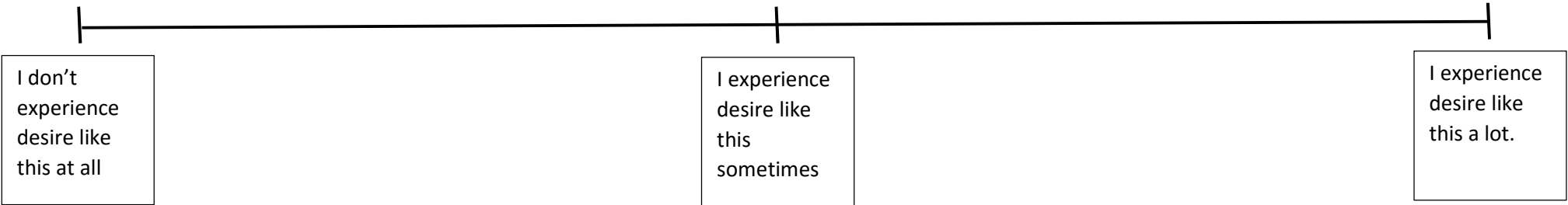
Butch Please: Sticks and Stones, by Kate, on Autostraddle

I’m a stone top. If you want to get under my surface, prepare for the long haul. I am not the kind of fruit that peels easier in hot water. I am the flower that only blooms once every few years, and only under the full moon during a downpour.

...

Sometimes I’m overcome by a deep guilt for the way I like to fuck. I want to take all of my partners and unite them in a circle, have them hold hands with me while apologies pour out of me like tears. I’m sorry I don’t like to take my clothes off, I’ll say, and I’m sorry that I don’t want you to touch me there. It’s not you, it’s me. The boundaries I have to put up don’t mean that I’m not letting you in. They don’t stand for your failure or my distrust. They’re an invitation to a new narrative, a new way of thinking about sex. I discovered my desire and my ability to communicate that desire to others on my own very queer path, and I wouldn’t change one thing about that. It was beautiful and imperfect and fucking incredible to discover someone else’s body in that way, with no expectations, with very little guidance, with nothing but skin exploring skin. I think there’s a way in which queer sex can subvert and transcend so many things because it is this wonderful free space, and when that translates to actual pleasure... oh, glory be.

Question: Do you experience asymmetry in desire? Wanting to give, or receive, but not the reverse?



Other thoughts...

Desire Smuggling

From: The Naked Truth about Desire Smuggling: Marcia B

Desire Smuggling: Hiding what you really want from yourself and/or a loved one, then, finding cover strategies to get (at least pieces of) what you want.

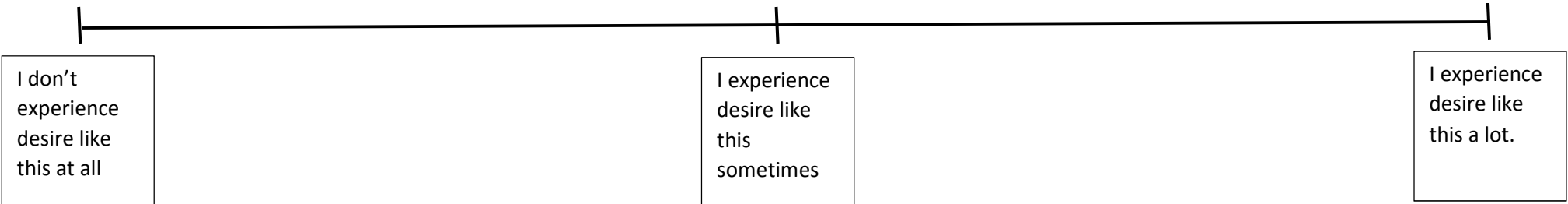
We do it to stay safe. It’s a reasonable response to a toxic environment of shame and judgment.

At the same time, desire is powerful. Even in the face of fear, rejection, guilt, loss... **we want what we want.** And through better or worse means, we will try to get it.

Desire smuggling is something that we *all* do. The stakes are high around what you truly want, and being direct can seem outright terrifying in the face of these (often well-justified) fears.

Desire smuggling techniques include: hinting, expecting your partner to read your mind, using intoxication as an excuse, faking spontaneity, asking if the other person wants what you want, saying “people like..” instead of owning it, being “nice” and hoping to be rewarded, looking for less scary places to get it, ...

Question: Do you recognise yourself desire smuggling?



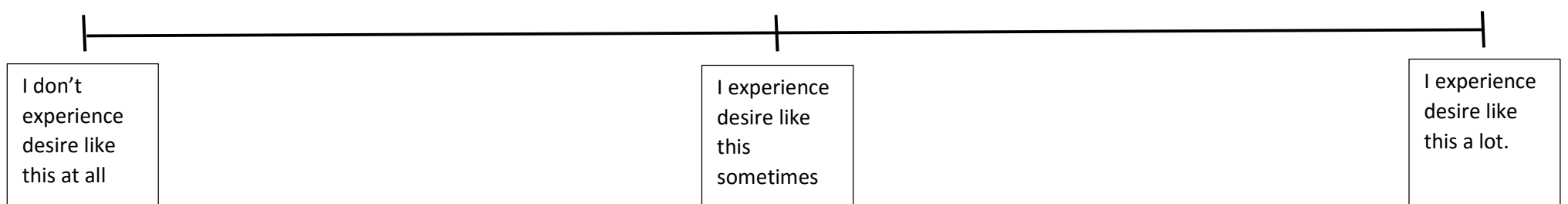
Other thoughts...

Accelerators, Brakes and Context

From “Come as You Are” by Emily Nagoski

- Your brain has a sexual “accelerator” that responds to “sexually relevant” stimulation—anything you see, hear, smell, touch, taste, or imagine that your brain has learned to associate with sexual arousal.
- Your brain also has sexual “brakes” that respond to “potential threats”—anything you see, hear, smell, touch, taste, or imagine that your brain interprets as a good reason not to be turned on right now. These can be anything from STDs and unwanted pregnancy to relationship issues or social reputation.
- There’s virtually no “innate” sexually relevant stimulus or threat; our accelerators and brakes learn when to respond through experience. And that learning process is different for males and females.
- People vary in how sensitive their brakes and accelerator are.
- Your brain’s perception of a sensation is context dependent. Like tickling: If your partner tickles you when you’re already feeling turned on, it can be fun. But if they tickle you when you’re angry, it’s just irritating. Same sensation, different context—therefore different perception.
- When you’re stressed out, your brain interprets just about everything as a potential threat. When you’re turned on, your brain could interpret just about anything as sexually appealing. Because: context!

Question: Do you recognise your accelerators, brakes and sensitivity to context?



Other thoughts...

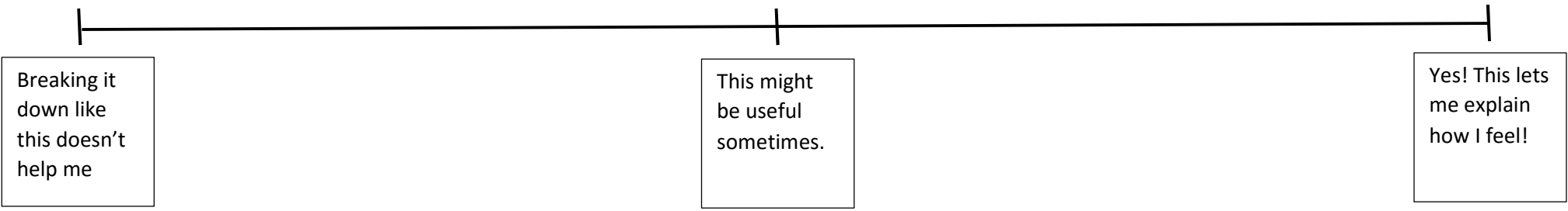
Primary, Secondary, Tertiary

Amalgamated from various sources

- Primary Attraction:** An attraction to a person based on instantly available information (for example: their appearance, smell, voice, hearing them speak).
- Secondary Attraction:** An attraction to a person that develops over time based on the relationship and emotional connection with that person.
- Tertiary Attraction:** An attraction to a person based on the perception of their attraction to you. (Also called reciprocal attraction)

These “categories” are usually applied to sexual attraction, but have been applied to romantic attraction as well.

Question: Do you recognise different categories of attraction like this? Is it useful language to explain how you feel?



Other thoughts...