

Dear Darling,

I have a best friend who is kind and wonderful and beautiful and amazing. Our relationship is everything to me. We've been friends since elementary school, and have kept in touch despite going to different high schools and colleges, and we facetime almost all the time. The only problem is that along the way, I kind of sort of maybe accidentally fell in love. Except, she's a girl, and I'm a girl, and she doesn't know I'm maybe gay I guess and I didn't know I'm maybe gay I guess. I would tell myself it's just a really good friendship, but somehow I don't think you're supposed to want to kiss your best friend on the lips. I've liked her for a while now, but at this point, I feel almost ready to give up and try to like other people. I know she would support me if I told her I was gay, but I don't know if she's gay, and then if she isn't, and I confess my feelings, how much have I fucked up? How do I even broach the conversation topic "do you like girls?" I just know I would never be able to find someone quite like her again. It's like Romeo and Juliet, but more complicated, modern, and no one's going to die in the end (presumably).

Please help me out here!

Juliet, 0 Juliet!

Let me start by shouting, from the rooftops, "Happy Pride Month!", I hope you can hear it because I'm screaming as loud as I can. I am simply over the moon about your question, because if there's one thing I love (there are so many things I love, but I digress...), it is love, in ALL of its many forms. It seems that you're in a heart-wrenching predicament, torn between languishing on the cliff's edge of the unknown and leaping headfirst into the abyss of putting yourself out

there. Oh me, oh my, what is a girl to do?! Let's talk about it!

First of all, welcome to the realization of your queerness, what a blessing to discover this important aspect of yourself, and what a joy to come into this discovery through a deep and lasting friendship. One thing that I'm picking up from your question, particularly from what I perceive as discomfort in the idea of wanting to kiss your best friend, is that you may be harboring a vision of what it means to be queer or how you're supposed to act in relation to others. While I think it is super important to have a solid moral compass and a vision for how you want to conduct yourself, I think things get a little dicey when we start thinking that there's a specific way that one has to act in order to be queer. Waaaaaay back when I was a baby queer (or honestly, long before I had even come to accept that label for myself), I was lucky enough to see author, playwright, and trans elder Kate Bornstein speak at a conference. One particular nugget from Kate's talk that has stuck with me since then is as follows (roughly paraphrased): "Do whatever you want to do, as long as it isn't hurting anybody else". Kate even went so far as to hand out these cute little "get out of hell free" cards that encouraged us to follow this wisdom, and promised that if we somehow ended up in hell anyways, Kate would gladly take our place. Looking back, this was such an important lesson to learn, and it has deeply informed my understanding of queerness, and anarchism, and just generally how I would like to move through the world. All of this to say, as long as wanting to kiss your best friend isn't hurting them, or anyone else, I think that it's totally an okay thing to do, and I would go so far as to say that we might all be a little happier (and a lot gayer) if we all kissed our best friends a little more.

Anyways, that's not the real question at hand here. It sounds like you're wrestling with the decision on whether or not to tell your friend how you feel. I don't want to tell you definitively how to proceed here, because I can't claim to know all of the ins and outs of your friendship like you do, but in my humble and hopelessly romantic opinion, I can say that if I was in your shoes, I would lean towards telling them. It sounds like you know that they would support you in exploring your newfound identity, which is such an important

piece of the puzzle to hold onto. If you're really worried, you could certainly ease into the conversation by discussing the realizations you're currently having about yourself without bringing this specific crush into it. You could talk about how it feels to be learning these new things, what you're excited or scared about (broadly speaking), and what kind of support would be helpful as you embark upon this journey of self-discovery. You could definitely even turn this towards your friend by asking questions like, "Do you relate to the things I'm sharing? Do you ever feel like you might have a queer crush on someone? How do you think you might navigate that if you did?" There are ways to do some exploration around this without being overly blunt, you just might have to spend some time thinking about your approach. There is a catch, though...

The catch is, simply, that you won't really truly know what could possibly be without being direct. You can do your research around the edges, and fish for information, and this might help inform how you want to proceed, but you ultimately won't get an answer to the question at the heart of it all ("Do you have a crush on me?"), unless you ask the question. Without that, you're still just relying on assumptions, and assumptions aren't particularly known for their strength or consistency. So, while I think there's definitely some groundwork that could be laid beforehand, eventually I would encourage you to be brave, bold, and direct, and share the joyous news that you're crushin' and hopin' for some reciprocity. Worst case scenario, you get told no, and while that might feel devastating in the moment, the truth is that life will go on. There is a chance that it might change the tenor of your relationship, but if your friend is as supportive as you say they are, I would imagine they might simply feel flattered and continue to be your friend. Hell, they could even turn into your wingman and help you find other people to explore your sexuality with! And wh better to gas you up to others than someone you've been friends with for practically your whole lives?!

The last thing that I'll say is that, following in the footsteps of lovelorn queers since time immemorial, don't underestimate the power of campy, over-the-top, romantic gestures. I believe that approaching these kind of situations

with a sense of humor can help to break the internal tension that you might be feeling. If you feel so called, go above and beyond and be extra silly about it. Make them a mixtape! Stand outside their window with a boombox in the rain! Take out a full-page ad in their local newspaper! Write a short story and read it out loud in a public place! Spray paint your message on a water tower in John Deere green on a hot summer night! Just remember the wisdom of Kate Bornstein: "Do whatever you want to do, as long as it isn't hurting anybody else". Oh, and please please PLEASE, write back to let me know how things go! I'll be cheering for you the whole time.

Yours in love and mischief,
Darling Tonia