

Communication and Negotiation

Prepared for Naughty in New Orleans

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Communication and Negotiation

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Communications and Negotiations Introduction

Lifestyle folks sometimes seem to speak another language. What works in the vanilla world is sometimes demonized in our culture. Before you know it, someone thinks you are disrespectful or predatory when you were just trying to say "hello". How do you approach people? How do you ask someone to play? How do you effectively negotiate when you don't have years of experience? Learn some tools to help you navigate the lifestyle language to include: How to approach someone and introduce yourself, avoiding the landmines of negotiation, some survival skills for the Lifestyle alphabet soup, and other effective communication tools.

You will get to see some role-played negotiations for some real-life models to help you with the vocabulary to communicate boundaries/limits/wants. You will also get some real-world information on the different ways a negotiation can be structured so you can choose the method most comfortable for you.

A negotiation is how we refer to the process that sets up play, a scene, or a relationship. However, you will never get there without effective communication skills leading up to and during.

There is a strong need for careful, specific, precise, and effective communication in any significant relationship or interaction. In the lifestyle as we look for play partners and longer-term power transfer relationships, the consequences of ineffective communication arguably are more acute with more adverse consequences. Our communication is complicated further with the addition of new words, new definitions for old words, new and different relationship models. We are obligated to continuously grow as effective communicators because of the nature of the responsibilities we assume as we participate in Lifestyle activities.

This class will teach you some simple tools to undertake communication and negotiations in a way that is meaningful for you and the other party. Better skills will help one avoid some of the pitfalls that ineffective communication sometimes generates and make our interactions more productive and rewarding for everyone.

Our Agenda:

- How negotiation has changed
- Types of Communication
- Communication Tools and Techniques
- Introductions
- Negotiations
- Negotiation subjects to discuss
- Negotiating a relationship
- Communicating safety Issues
- Lifeguards /Spotters
- INFORMED CONSENT
- Negotiation models and practice

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Some definitions and explanations

We speak how we live, but it is no way reflective of any judgement on the right way to live. Our pronoun and relationship identifiers are based on what we are. If a word choice or pronoun doesn't apply to you, please feel free to substitute what does. Our choices are what they are because that's how WE live, so we speak and write in a way that is natural for us. We are not offended or put off by other folk's choices, and we hope you won't be either.

If, however, a word choice or example is exclusionary or offensive, please call us out-IN CLASS, so we can do a better job for you, and everyone in class can learn from our mistake. I promise we will thank you.

Because this class is kink and lifestyle inclusive, some words we will use that may not be familiar:

Authority Transfer Relationship (ATR) for the purposes of this class

We refer to Authority Transfer relationship when talking about what other people might call "Power Exchange" or D/s, or M/s, or Domestic Discipline, or Head of Household relationships. This applies to a relationship, rather than a scene.

S-Type for the purposes of this class

We refer to S-Types as one who self-identifies as the small letter in an authority transfer dynamic. This is not a personality trait; it is a relationship role. Slave, Submissive, someone involved in a Domestic Discipline or Head of Household relationship would all qualify. This is someone who has or is looking for a D-Type. While someone can identify as an S-Type for scene purposes only, for this class we use this to identify someone in a relationship of this kind rather than a scene.

D-Type (Or M-Type) for the purposes of this class

We refer to D-Types or M-Types as one who self-identifies as the large letter in an authority transfer dynamic. This is also not a personality trait; it is a relationship role. Dominant, Domme, Master, Mistress. Someone involved in a Domestic Discipline or Head of household relationship would all qualify. This is someone who has or is looking for an S-Type. While someone can identify as a D-Type for scene purposes only, for this class we use this to identify someone in a relationship of this kind rather than a scene.

Top and Bottom the purposes of this class

Scene roles. Top is the one doing, Bottom is the one receiving. This is independent of an ATR role.

What is Consent?

An informed, voluntary agreement by two or more people to engage in a particular activity or to enter a relationship.

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All activities must receive prior consent explicitly by verbal or written agreement rather than through gestures, body language or past behavior.

How Consent and Negotiating has changed...

As you probably know... the National Coalition for Sexual Freedom (<https://www.NCSFreedom.org>) has succeeded in decriminalizing BDSM in the new Model Penal Code on Sexual Assault, which was approved in June of this year.

This is groundbreaking because, even today, people who engage in BDSM- even if it's consensual- may still be violating their current state law. That's why this change was necessary.

One Very Important Point - The text has to be approved by each State Legislature to become law, And that's why the next step is to lobby in each state to get the MPC on Sexual Assault adopted. However, the text can be used however the text of this model law can be introduced into any criminal court case or cited in briefs. That means it will be considered by law enforcement and judges.

On the next page is the text of the new MPC on SA, including the definitions of consent for sex and for BDSM, and know the all of the information today conforms with 213:10

This is as close as we've ever come to have something to protect us in BDSM interactions, so it is important that we conform to the MPC even though it has not yet become law.

NCSF's Incident Reporting & Response has already submitted it in a case, where both people say it was consensual, and they did the right things by having a safeword and planning out what they would do.

Links:

- National Coalition for Sexual Freedom Consent Counts: [Consent Counts \(ncsfreedom.org\)](https://ncsfreedom.org)
- American Law Institute on 213:10: <https://www.ali.org/projects/show/sexual-assault-and-related-offenses/>
- The Grading of Offenses, Model Penal Code: Sexual Assault and Related Offenses (2021) on Vimeo Erin E. Murphy (NYU Law), Associate Reporter for Model Penal Code: Sexual Assault and Related Offenses: <https://vimeo.com/557586038> (Section 10 begins about 14:19)

Other References:

ARS 13-1406. Sexual assault; classification; increased punishment A person commits sexual assault by intentionally or knowingly engaging in sexual intercourse or oral sexual contact with any person without consent of such person

Pertinent Legal Definitions Under Arizona Revised Statutes

Consent – ARS 13-1401(5)

“Without consent” includes any of the following:

1. The victim is coerced by the immediate use or threatened use of force against person or property.
2. The victim is incapable of consent by reason of mental disorder, mental defect, drugs, alcohol, sleep or any other similar impairments of cognition and such condition is known or should have reasonably been known to the defendant. For purposes of this subdivision, “mental defect” means the victim is

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unable to comprehend the distinctively sexual nature of the conduct or is incapable of understanding or exercising the right to refuse to engage in the conduct with another.

3. The victim is intentionally deceived as to the nature of the act.
4. The victim is intentionally deceived to erroneously believe that the person is the victim's spouse.

CONSENT FOR BDSM

Section 213:10 - Affirmative Defense
of Explicit Prior Permission

You may personally give another person **explicit prior permission** to use or threaten to use **physical force or restraint**, or to inflict or threaten to inflict any harm in connection with an act of sexual penetration, oral sex, or sexual contact, **as long as it doesn't cause serious injury**.

NCSF Consent Counts

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EXPLICIT PRIOR PERMISSION

Permission is “explicit” under Section 10 when it is personally given verbally or by written agreement:

(a) specifying that the actor may ignore the other party’s expressions of unwillingness or other absence of consent;

(b) identifying the specific forms and extent of force, restraint, or threats that are permitted; and

(c) stipulating the specific words or gestures that will withdraw the permission.

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Types of Communication

Verbal: A conversation-talking. We use verbal communication to inform, whether it is to inform others of our needs or to impart knowledge. Verbal Communication is the most convenient and fastest way to communicate.

Non-verbal: Nonverbal communication is the transfer of information through the use of body language including facial expressions, gestures, paralinguistics such as loudness or tone of voice, body language, proxemics or personal space, eye gaze, haptics (touch), appearance, and artifacts. Making eyes, your posture, are you on their level, making eye contact etc. While body language should never been an indicator of consent, it can be a useful tool in complementing or contradicting the verbal message.

Written: Written: It could be as simple as email/text, or you could be talking about more complex communication like petitions and contracts. Written communication is the most formal and concrete kind of communication in most cases. It has the benefit of not requiring all parties to be present, it tends to have fewer cycles, and it has the benefit of being something you can reference.

It is important in ANY kind of communication that you are aware of careful, specific, precise, and effective communication both verbally and non-verbally. You can have the best words and vocabulary in the world, but if your body language doesn't match, you lose the impact.

Some Communication is "easy"

- Some communication, at least here at APEX is very straightforward.
 - No" means no, and "Yes" means yes.
 - Call yourself what you want to be called and we will honor that
 - Jobs, status etc. don't matter here
- That is where the 'easy' ends, particularly when you are not yet confident in your ability or comfortable with the process.
- As you become a better communicator and negotiator, other subjects will al
- so become "easy."

We have told you in previous years to be very cautious about putting your negotiations in writing because that could be used as inculpatory evidence against you in court.

Now with 213:10 of the Model Penal Code, those written agreements could now be used as exculpatory evidence if you get arrested providing you followed the rules.

Affirmative Defense of Explicit Prior Permission: You may personally give another person explicit prior permission to use or threaten to use physical force or restraint, or to inflict or threaten to inflict any harm in connection with an act of sexual penetration, oral sex, or sexual contact.

The Rules:

1. Consent must be explicit, that means talking and agreeing to what you'll be doing before you start.
2. You must specify what kinds of expressions of unwillingness are okay to ignore.
3. You must identify the specific activities and how intense they will be, which requires being informed about the risks.
4. You must agree to a safe-word or gesture that will withdraw permission.
5. Whatever is done, it can't cause serious injury.

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Some Communication Is More Challenging

- Most of the time clubs and events are a very casual environment– parties and negotiating play are more difficult. Frequently play begins when someone arrives, so it is more challenging to interact with or meet new people.
- Socially, meeting people is easy. Just introduce yourself.
- Finding a play partner can be more challenging and complex.
- Play the ‘new guy’ card: Ask questions, listen, have fun!
- There is no mandated protocol beyond the agreement you made when joining or buying tickets. There IS relationship-based protocol. You have no obligation to participate, however, to interact more effectively with your peers; you at the very least should understand and respect it.

Communication Tools and Techniques

Often, messages flow both directions simultaneously. Listening skills, understanding a person’s message, is more important than anything you must add before they’ve finished. As Stephen Covey wrote, “Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”

The Components of Effective Communication:

- The Information that will be conveyed or communicated
- The Sender, who encodes the information into a message
- The Channel that is used to transport the message
- The Message itself, which contains the information
- The Receiver, who decodes and interprets the message to receive the information received from the sender, channel, and message, and
- Feedback (the Communication in the reverse direction containing the information received) which allows the sender to check accuracy of the information received

Each of these components has multiple elements, and if any of these elements or components are inadequate or neglected, then communication fails, and the desired information/message has been altered or lost. Conversely, careful selection of appropriate elements within each component may dramatically improve the likelihood that information/messages are received as intended.

A personal note: Limit your message. Not everyone can process large amounts of information in one sitting. Make your message clear and to the point. You can work out the details once you have agreement on the general message.

Communication Barriers

Be aware that, despite the best communication skills, there are barriers to effective communication. You can improve your ability to negotiate by increasing your knowledge of such things and modifying your communication to reflect them. Communication barriers can occur at or IN the sender and/or receiver, and in the communication channel itself.

- Environmental Barriers (noise, physical obstruction, interruptions, time and distance, etc.)
- Physical limitation (poor hearing, etc.)

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- Emotional Barriers (differences in perception, distraction, personal issues or concerns, lack of confidence, filtering, etc.)
- Language, Cultural, and Gender Barriers
- Lack of planning (inadequate preparation to negotiate, inappropriate place, time restrictions, etc.)
- Wrong or unclarified expectations or messages
- Information Overload
- Goal Conflicts
- Offensive Style of Communication

Navigating the Lexicon: Improve your vocabulary!

Words sometimes mean different things to different people. One of the best tools we can give you is the ability to ask “What do you mean by that” or “This is my understanding of that word/phrase/activity, is that what you mean?”

Know your Audience!

The most clearly articulated message doesn't mean a thing to anyone if the words mean something different to them. When you use a word or phrase that may be in question, define it. Make the phrase “What I mean when I say ‘X’...” a part of your vocabulary.

Effective Communication Checklist

- Be specific, rather than general
- Be descriptive rather than evaluative
- Focus on the issue rather than the person
- When focusing on the issue, direct communication toward activities or actions the receiver can affect or control.
- Be well timed in your delivery
- Allow two-way communication
- Tailor communication to the knowledge, abilities and needs of the sender and receiver.

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Introductions

Socially, meeting people is easy. Just introduce yourself. Finding a play partner can be more challenging and complex. In our culture, an offer to play is not always out of the blue-but certainly can be. Make sure you prepare yourself for that to happen and decide what to say. Think about how to communicate what you are asking or saying clearly and accurately.

- Timing and approach
- Clear, specific, and accurate communication
- When to walk away
- Ending a negotiation properly

A Fun Example: The Hanky Code

The Hanky Code also known as the bandanna code or flagging is a form of nonverbal communication that signals to others what your preferences and interests are. In some cultures, men used this code to communicate with each other in the noisy and distracting environment of gay bars. Although not as widely used these days, and generally not used at all in American Pan/Het Spaces, it is still a worthwhile resource and is, among those who know, a great conversation starter. In the appendix is the widely accepted set of colors in Arizona, as supplied to us by the Arizona Men of Leather. Regionally, or even place to place you will find different commonly accepted practices. Make sure you clarify!

Hankies can also be worn around the wrist, ankle, or leg (at the thigh, above the knee), or around the neck with the tie going either right or left. Other objects such as bracelets, keys, key chains, watch fobs, or even handcuffs can also be used to let people know if you're a "top" or "bottom." "Flagging Right" indicates you are the bottom, or receiver. "Flagging Left" means you are the top, or "doer." If worn in the back on the center belt loop, it translates as "switch."

Communicating and Hearing Boundaries

Learning to communicate (and hear) boundaries is one of the most liberating things about our chosen communities. Having this kind of freedom, and exercising agency brings confidence to every interaction.

In order to draw a boundary all you have to do is plainly outline it. This can include things like

- "I don't want to talk about this right now."
- "I would like to discuss X and not Y."
- "Please don't touch me without my permission"
- "I don't want to play."
- "I am open to negotiating X, but not Y."

Sometimes drawing boundaries can be uncomfortable until you get used to doing it regularly. You aren't being impolite; you are being a clear communicator and taking control of your experience. That makes you a responsible adult. Practice drawing smaller boundaries and in no time this more straightforward kind of communication will be completely comfortable to you.

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Nothing should happen to you or with you without your consent. You need to make sure that is true for everyone you meet. Sometimes, when someone hasn't quite mastered the art of effective communication you need to search for boundaries. What that might look like:

- "Are you comfortable with this conversation?"
- "Would you like to keep talking about this?"
- "Would you like to discuss possibly playing?"
- "Are you confident you can tell me if this conversation makes you uncomfortable?"

We keep addressing the conversation because consent begins there. If you aren't sure you even have someone's consent to have the conversation, you can't possibly be confident in your negotiations. Always give someone the opportunity to say "no".

Hearing "No": Separate refusal from rejection

One of the most valuable skills you can learn, is hearing "no" in a positive and constructive way. The freedom to express our preferences and draw boundaries is one of the greatest gifts our Lifestyle gives us. "No" is simply someone drawing a boundary with you. "No" doesn't have anything to do with you, it is all about the other person and their preferences. They expressed a preference with you, nothing more. It doesn't mean you smell funny or they don't like you, it merely means they don't want to have that conversation or do that thing. "No", only means "No". Thank them for their clear communication and move on.

While "No" only means no, it is unequivocal and permanent. It is not OK to ask "Why", it is none of your business. It is also not OK to ask again, unless someone explicitly says, "You can ask again another time". The absence of "No" does NOT mean "Yes". Only "Yes" means "Yes". This is an important distinction. If you haven't heard "Yes", that means you do not have an agreement.

Saying "No"

You need to own your "No". If you tell someone "No", understand that this is the end of the conversation. If you change your mind, you will have to initiate that. If you aren't sure, use "Maybe" or "Not today, but ask again" or other language that keeps the door open. Playing coy is just that...playing a game. You must own your words. We tell people they have to respect "No", so respect "No" when you are using it in addition to hearing it.

Saying "Yes"

While you can revoke consent at any time, it is important that you own ALL of your words. "Yes" means "Yes", until it is communicated otherwise. Please don't ever agree based on politeness. You are worth more than that. It is not a consent violation if you said "yes" and didn't revoke it. Please help people be successful when interacting with you.

Learning to say “No”

For some people, learning to say “no” and drawing boundaries is difficult. When you say NO, you teach people how to treat you. It’s not easy to go from being uncomfortable with saying No, to being able to say No confidently.. Practice is the only way you will get better at this. But, the good news is each time you say NO, it becomes easier.

Begin respecting yourself by refusing to waste your time, space, and energy on things you don’t value, people who don’t appreciate you, or activities that don’t lift you up.

If someone can’t trust you to say “No”, they can’t trust your “Yes”.

Saying NO to what you don’t want is the key to being able to say YES to what is important and valuable.

5 TIPS TO HELP YOU NAVIGATE

- PRACTICE SAYING “NO”.
- LEARN BODY LANGUAGE CUES
- LISTEN TO OTHER PEOPLE
- DO YOUR RESEARCH
- NEGOTIATE EVERYTHING

SAYING “NO” CAN BE HARD. WE ARE TAUGHT TO BE POLITE, AND “NO” SOMETIMES FEELS IMPOLITE. DON’T BUY INTO THAT. PRACTICE YOUR “NO”, EVERY DAY. PRACTICE DRAWING THE BOUNDARIES THAT YOU DESERVE.

LEARN BODY LANGUAGE. NOT EVERYONE IS SPENDING THEIR TIME LEARNING TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY. YOU CAN HELP THEM IF YOU CAN IDENTIFY BODY LANGUAGE CUES SO YOU CAN HELP THEM HAVE MORE SPECIFIC CONVERSATIONS.

FROM MASTERFUL NEGOTIATOR. A BUSINESS CLASS I TEACH TO PROFESSIONALS.

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Negotiations

A Negotiation is defined as, “A dialogue between two or more people attempting to reach a mutually beneficial agreement.” In short, it is what we call the process we use to set up any kind of play, sex, a BDSM or kink scene, or an authority exchange relationship.



Negotiations are the most important thing that we do! It allows us to discover our potential partner's limitations, interests, and physical limits. This can be in the form of discussion or done in writing. It may not be the most fun or sexy part of what we do, but it is the most important. This is NOT just a Top's responsibility. This is not the time to be mysterious or coy. This is the time for facts, fears, and information. There is plenty of time for fun when the housekeeping has been handled! We (and our partners) are not omnipotent, so if it is something your potential play partner should know, TELL THEM! This includes the level of experience you have with a kind of play.

Negotiation Pointers

Honesty: The best service you can do for yourself, and your prospective partner is to be honest about your experience, and what you WANT. If you set expectations appropriately, no one will be disappointed. Beware the power of your kinks.

Integrity: A Top that sticks to what was originally negotiated, even when the bottom wants more during the scene, exhibits great character. A bottom that realizes that the negotiated scene has exceeded his or her limits, can communicate this and will terminate the scene, if necessary, is something both partners can appreciate afterward. Volunteering references or permitting inquiries about previous play partners also shows integrity.

Trust: Establish trust with your prospective partner to make negotiations flow more smoothly; provide him or her with a sense of safety and/or security. Once trust is established, negotiation can be shifted to potential play (if negotiations are successful) and you can enjoy an added sense of confidence and passion.

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Be Prepared to Negotiate: Put On Your Game Face

Pre-negotiation Approaches and Structures

Informally: A conversation. The two (or more) of you will decide on your chosen communication, and address issues along the way. Rules and structure are decided through the interaction.

Formally: Rules, procedures, and structured communication. Structure can be decided pre-negotiation. *In some circles, negotiation is "ritualized"- "here's how it's done".*

Negotiating tools

Keep it in the scope it belongs. Don't turn it into something it is not. Be clear, be precise.

Lots of heartache is created when people decide this simple scene is going to be something more. Don't do it. Keep it in context!

A manipulation tactic is people who use "scenes", "teaching", or "Mentoring" as a guise to get someone into a relationship or otherwise engaged. So, keep things in context!

What kind of negotiation is this?

- **One time:** Play/Scene, on site, for a purpose
- **Repeatable:** Potentially a regular play partner than should include when/how to evaluate
- **Longer term:** Power exchange dynamics in or out of scene, petitions, contracts etc.
- Relationship negotiations. D/s, M/s

Create a List!

That has your wants, needs, limits, boundaries, or any other information you would want a partner (or prospective partner) to know.

This is a living document that changes as you learn more about yourself. Keep it handy as a reference or create it in a form you can allow someone else to read.

This kind of tool doesn't replace a good conversation, but it is a great place to begin!

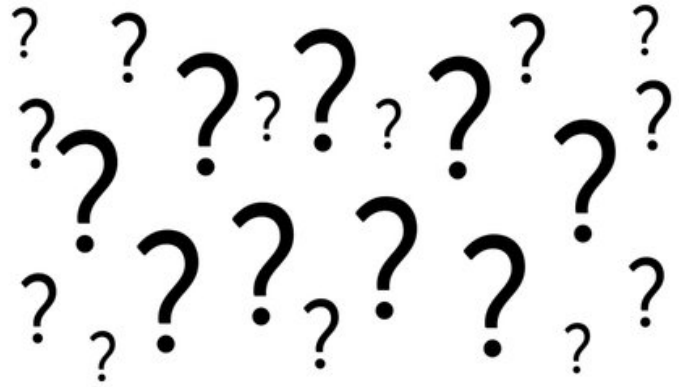
Does anyone need to approve this negotiation?

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Asking Questions:

- Be direct
- Make eye contact
- Use plain language
- Be brief
- Use Simple Sentences
- Maintain focus on the subject
- Make certain the purpose is clear
- The question must be appropriate for the situation or person
- The manner of asking should reflect the intent
- Know what to do with the answer



Be prepared to compromise

- Rarely do people have 100% matchup in interests or activities.
- Have a clear image of your deal-breakers, and don't sell yourself short!
- Know what you WANT. Know what you're willing to compromise for!
- You don't have to get everything from one scene, relationship, or person

Remember to structure your life the way YOU want to structure your life.

When You Play: REMEMBER WHAT YOU NEGOTIATED!!!

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Negotiation Subjects to Discuss

Trust breeds confidence and clears the way for passion. The only way to create trust is to be honest, do what you say you will do how you will say you will do it, and be consistent!

- Who: The particular people and what they bring to the table
- What: The details and roadmap
- When: Calendar and clock
- Why: Motivations and expectations
- How: Communication, safety, feedback

First CHECK YOURSELF before you negotiate!

Do a self-check before negotiating (or playing).

- Am I in a positive frame of mind?
- H.A.L.T.! Am I hungry, angry, lonely, tired? All of these can be a barrier to honest and fair negotiations.
- Is my judgment impaired somehow?
- Caution: Negotiate only when both of you are alert and in good spirits. If one or both of you feels tired, sleepy, sad, angry, fearful, hungry, or otherwise upset, negotiate (and play) later.
-

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Who

The Particular people and what they bring to the table

- **People**
 - Is it just the two of us? Just you, or you and your partner?
 - Does anyone else need to consent to this negotiation?
 - If you are checking references, please make it clear that this negotiation is contingent on your completing that to your satisfaction.
 - Are there any significant others of either partner or how do those partners feel about the person playing with someone else?
 - Observers, personal DM's, spotters, Lifeguards, assistants
 - It is OK to agree in principle and then comeback with additional questions after you have researched!
- **Skills**
 - What are the relevant skill levels of everyone involved?
 - Large disparities need to be addressed
- **Intoxicants**
 - Know the risks!
- **Health Concerns**
 - Testing and STI Status
 - Chronic Illnesses/injuries
 - Medications
 - Physical concerns
 - Disclose ALL medical, mental, physical conditions (i.e. joint issues, medical conditions currently being treated, PTSD or other psychological disorders, communicable diseases, medications, etc.)
 - Be prepared to answer questions and have solutions devised to deal with these issues.
 - Discuss your limits and make certain your partner understands why you require them.

Ability to Consent

Each person should understand everyone's limitations or barriers to their ability to consent to the planned activities, such as age, diminished mental capacity, or use of drugs or alcohol.

Don't re-negotiate in the middle of your scene unless it is to reject activities that were previously agreed to. A person who is in an altered state of mind may not be able to give informed consent.

What are today's health conditions?

Calorie intake, water intake, alcohol consumption, stresses, menstrual cycle, non-play injuries, tummy troubles, headaches, lack of sleep...and the list goes on! Each day is a new day, so be flexible with yourself and your partner...and COMMUNICATE!

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What

The details and road map

- **Roles**
 - Meeting as equals or is there some sort of role-play or power dynamic happening?
 - Top/Bottom only or some other “role” in scene like Dom/Sub, Master/slave, school girl/head master etc.
 - Honorifics to be used (Sir, Ma’am, Daddy etc.)
 - Protocol
- **Types of play (inclusive of kink/fetish)**
 - INFORMED consent
 - Impact
 - Sensual
 - Sensory deprivation
 - Bondage
 - Psychological
 - Theatrical
 - Fear
 - Others...
 - (Negotiation checklists)
- **Anatomy of play**
 - Which toys, who brings them?
 - Who brings in the toys (pack mule!)
 - Who lays out the toys?
 - Who sets up the equipment?
 - Who cleans up afterwards?
 - Who packs up and carries the toys out?
- **Limits and boundaries: physical/emotional (humiliation etc.) /relationship (Does anyone need to approve)**
 - What is a soft limit?
 - What will make a soft limit into a “Yes”
 - What is a hard limit or a deal breaker?
 - You need to know and express yours!
 - **Physical limits**
 - Pain, marks etc.
 - **Psychological**
 - Humiliation etc.
 - Top limits: YES! Tops can have limits as well.
- **Aftercare**
 - Who does the aftercare?
 - How much aftercare?
 - Specific requirements-how long, what someone needs and wants. WHO will do what?

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What Continued...

- **Gear and attire**
 - Whose toys are we going to use
 - Outfits/uniforms
 - Disposable clothing
 - Accessories
- **Sex (Define what sex means to this person)**
 - Sexual contact...
 - Kissing?
 - Fluid bonded or barriers
 - Penetration or not...penetrate what?
 - Who can touch whom? Where, how, when...

When

- **Time**
 - Duration
 - Start
 - End
 - Who is keeping time?

Where

- **Location**
 - Public or private play? What kind of room?
 - Do you like to be “center stage” or do you prefer a quiet corner?
 - Where would you be most comfortable?
 - What kind of furniture do you prefer?

Why

- **Motivations: What’s the point?**
 - Is physical play part of a power exchange experience for you, or is it a sensual exchange between equals with no power exchange?
 - What kinds of experiences are exciting/HOT to you in your fantasy life or in a scene?
 - My play is empowering
 - Personal growth/cathartic
 - Experimenting
 - Just for fun!

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- **Expectations & Needs**
 - This is play
 - I want top/sub space
 - My BDSM is empowering
 - Personal growth/cathartic
 - Experimenting

How

- **Communication in scene**
 - How will that be handled?
 - How will consent be gained
 - What expressions of unwillingness can be ignored?
 - How does everyone make it stop?
 - Unable to communicate?
 - A Top that sticks to what was originally negotiated, even when the bottom wants more during the scene.
 - A bottom that realizes that the negotiated scene has exceeded their limits and can communicate this to the Top.
- **Safety**
 - Focus can shift to playing instead of safety issues
 - What do YOU need to feel safe?
 - Equipment
 - Limits of equipment
 - Safe words/call/signal
 - Know layout of space
 - Specialty play concerns
 - Safer sex practices
 - Triggers
- **Accidents**
 - Scenes go wrong. Even the most prepared and experienced people make bad decisions, or just have bad luck. Being prepared if something goes wrong can make the difference between everything working out, and having a tragedy on your hands.
 - Both parties must agree that any accidents, miscommunications, etc will be handled in a mature/constructive manner.
 - What to do in case of emergency: Your index card.
 - Legal name
 - Date of Birth
 - Medical Conditions
 - Medicine they are taking
 - Allergies
 - Who to call in case of emergency/hospitalization?

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- When/what they last ate (include things like energy drinks)
- Any significant risk factors in their day (alcohol/drugs/heavy stress/medical incident)
 - It is OK to take a piece of paper before your scene and write these down. Keep 3x5 cards in your toy bag! If your partner is uncomfortable with your having this information, just have them write it down and put it in their purse/wallet/bag so you know where it is, but you don't have it unless you need it!
- **Follow up and Feedback**
 - Keep in mind that needs/desires change over time, and can change from day to day
 - Discuss how it went for you (Remember to be honest)
 - Did it happen the way you expected it to?
 - Did we do anything we didn't clearly negotiate?
 - 3x3 as an example
 - What would you have liked added?

Conditional Agreement

It is OK to enter a negotiation and agree with some contingencies. You can say "I'm agreeable to this providing that X, Y, or Z occurs".

Examples of Contingencies or Conditions:

- Sleeping on it
- Checking references
- Watching them play with someone else
- Researching a kind of play
- Getting permission
- Finding a Lifeguard

Reminder about Clubs/Events

Please remember that while you've agreed to certain things at clubs or events, you need to negotiate those things elsewhere. Other places have other kinds of agreements. You can't hold people outside of a particular club or event responsible for things we adhere to at the club.

Some Examples of those Agreements

- Confidentiality
- Touch is by consent only
- Respect other's opinions and choices
- Respect yourself and others
- Cleaning and cleaning supplies
- Scene space
- People involving themselves in your scene
- Interruptions
- Medical supplies

Negotiating a Relationship

We've talked a LOT about play because that is the immediate PHYSICAL danger. How about the emotional danger that exists with negotiating service, a relationship, or authority transfer?

To find additional checklists and reading opportunities:

<http://myworldunfiltered.com/presentation-notes-archive/>

<http://www.seekers.org.uk/Negotiating%20A%202024-7%20BDSM%20Relationship.html>

<http://www.experienceproject.com/stories/Want-To-Share-Something-Interesting/2788124>

<http://bdsmcontracts.org/>

Skills

As we discussed in the "negotiations" section above, it is important that you are honest about your level of skill and experience. Honesty means "informed consent" rather than having a partner who feels deceived after the fact.

Don't think "I've never done this before" is a black mark against you. It isn't! New people get the MOST play because they ASK. New people say, "I'd like to try this, want to try it with me?". Just be honest and doors will open for you!

Consider this: If you are honest about your experience, you are setting someone's expectations appropriately. They will be pleasantly surprised if it goes well and won't judge you harshly if it doesn't. On the other hand, if you exaggerate your level of experience someone will be very disappointed and know you weren't being honest. A person who feels deceived is not likely to say 'yes' again and is also not likely to say very nice things about you!

It can be as simple as "I've only done this once before, but I'd like to get better, want to try it with me?", or "I've taken some classes, but I'd like to practice, you game?". IT IS OK if you aren't an expert. People only become 'experts' through practice!

Exaggerating your experience just undermines credibility and trust. I've never had anyone say "no" when I've said, "I want to get great at this, want to be my guinea pig"? They don't always go well, and sometimes the results are downright embarrassing, but it makes for a good story later if it is handled properly!

Communicating Safety Issues

Use plain language when discussing health or safety issues. Use the phrase "What I mean when I say x is..." often. If someone uses language from the BDSM Alphabet soup ASK FOR CLARIFICATION. Lots of drama and angst comes from not sharing a vocabulary. There is NO reason for misunderstandings.

While all play has risks that should be discussed, some kinds of play have a larger measure of safety requirements than other kinds of play. If you are engaging in play where the safety process is a big part of the play, as specific questions. You have a right to know! If you aren't sure what those questions are, take a class, or bring a spotter/lifeguard to help you.

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While we pride ourselves in “Your way is the right way” a few things have *commonly accepted precautions because of the risks involved. While it is OK to decide with your partner that you won’t take certain precautions, everyone has the right to be informed PRIOR to giving consent if that is the case.

Fetishes that may require specific safety knowledge:

- Impact
- Blood
- Condom use
- Aerosolized blood
- Handling of body fluids
- Fire Safety: Proper handling of fuel, safety equipment etc.
- Electricity-limits and locations

If you practice the basic precautions (or choose not to and have consent), it isn’t anyone’s business how you get it done! If you and your partner are enjoying yourselves...life is good!

*When we say “commonly accepted” we mean, in our experience most players agree on a certain minimum standard of risk prevention. What sort of safety measures you put into place is up to you and your partner to agree.

Lifeguards and Spotters

A great way to make sure that everyone is speaking the same language is to get help! A lifeguard or spotter is a great way to ensure that negotiations go smoothly and that those negotiations are respected. Find someone you are comfortable with. Have them sit in on your negotiations. Have them assist with questions and terms. To further ensure agreement you can have that person watch your scene. They know what you agreed to, and they can make sure everyone is respected and that no one gets carried away.

Good times to get a lifeguard:

- The first few times you’ve done something
- When you’re learning something
- When the scene is ‘casual’ (pick-up play)
- When you typically play inside an established relationship

Who may not make good Lifeguards?

- Your partner(s) or their partner(s)
- Your regular play partner(s) or their regular play partner(s)

You want a Lifeguard who is impartial and objective!

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ON CONSENT

Having consent is the difference between a fun Saturday night, and going to jail for domestic violence or assault. Enthusiastic, affirmative consent is what makes us different from criminals. Incomplete or inadequate negotiations often result in a 'consent incidents/violations' despite good intentions. Good intentions don't count for much when someone feels violated.

Levels of Consent

- Implied consent is a controversial form of consent which is not expressly granted by a person, but rather inferred from a person's actions and the facts and circumstances of a situation (or in some cases, by a person's silence or inaction).
 - In our view, only "yes" means "yes", and despite someone's behavior, body language, or intentions, we need to hear a clear "yes". We are all adults, doing adult things. We need to behave like adults when we negotiate.
- Express consent is clearly and unmistakably stated, rather than implied. It may be given in writing, by speech (orally), or non-verbally, e.g. by a clear gesture such as a nod.
 - Express consent is acceptable when you are asking direct questions like "Is this pressure OK?", or "Would you like to me slow down?".
- Informed consent in medicine is consent given by a person who has a clear appreciation and understanding of the facts, implications, and future consequences of an action.
 - This is our Gold Standard of Consent. If someone doesn't know the risks associated with what you are doing, the "yes" isn't very valuable. It is important that we are talking about risks in the specific, all the time. People should have the right to walk away.
- Unanimous consent, or general consent, by a group of several parties (e.g., an association) is consent given by all parties.
 - Not particularly applicable in our situation.

Everyone has the right to direct what happens to their body, and everyone has an ethical (and sometimes legal) duty to involve the everyone in the planning, decisions, and execution.

INFORMED CONSENT is our gold standard of consent and the term we use to refer to the process to disclose appropriate information to a competent person, so that all of the people involved may make a voluntary choice to accept or refuse a given activity.

INFORMED CONSENT is not just to protect the Bottom! Bottoms who try to bait-and-switch or change the rules are also consent violators. Don't let this become you! Even if we don't go as far as criminal acts, we live and die by our reputations in this community, protect yours.

The best standards of disclosure are very, very subjective. So, you'll have to work out situation by situation how much information is "enough". However, borrowing from the medical profession, a good place to start might be: "What would this particular person need to know and understand to make an informed decision?" While this is a difficult standard because you must know a great deal about the bottom, and you must tailor this information for every situation, when you can do it successfully, you've likely met your ethical obligation.

Informed Consent Checklist

- Does everyone understand exactly what will occur, and in what order?
 - A great way to test this is to get everyone to say out loud in plain language what they agree to.
 - Did everyone present reasonably identifiable risks?
- Has everyone agreed on the things that are important to them separately?
 - Boundaries, limits, time, people, activities etc. This is a good time for both to reiterate those things and make sure everyone is clear.
- Has everyone discussed the “Commonly Accepted Safety Practices” and agreed on what will and will not occur?
 - If anyone is fuzzy on this subject, it is a good time to get a Lifeguard. Talk about safety issues etc. in plain language.
- Has everyone discussed what might go wrong, and how to handle it?
 - Potential accidents, if X should happen, we agree you will do Y. I can think of 100 of these for ANY kind of play. DISCUSS THEM.
- Has everyone agreed on communication?
 - What expressions of unwillingness can be ignored?
 - How does either party make what is happening stop?
- Does everyone feel comfortable that they have asked the relevant questions and have had the time to think through and discuss their boundaries?
 - If anyone feels like they would like to research more, or ask more questions, then it is not yet a “Yes”.
- Has everyone agreed to how follow up will work?
 - We are not discussing aftercare; we are discussing follow up. How it went, outcomes, feedback for future negotiations.
 - A great question to ask: Were there any surprises, or anything for which you did not feel prepared?

Consent for Sex vs. Consent for Kink

<https://www.NCSFreedom.org>

Along with the definition of consent to BDSM, there is also a definition of consent for sexual contact, without any use of force or restraint, approved in 2016, the year after the NCSF got their lawyer into the ALI.

General Definition of Consent for Sex

(i) “Consent” means a person’s willingness to engage in a specific act of sexual penetration, oral sex, or sexual contact.

(ii) Consent may be express or it may be inferred from behavior—both action and inaction—in the context of all the circumstances.

(iii) Neither verbal nor physical resistance is required to establish that consent is lacking, but their absence may be considered, in the context of all the circumstances, in determining the issue of consent.

(iv) Consent is ineffective when given by a person incompetent to consent or under circumstances precluding the free exercise of consent.

(v) Consent may be revoked or withdrawn any time before or during the act of sexual penetration, oral sex, or sexual contact.

This definition of consent is critical, because in 20 states, there is no definition of consent in the sexual assault law. However, for the majority of states, this definition does reflect the legal standard of consent that is currently used.

Consent for BDSM

1. Consent must be explicit, that means talking and agreeing to what you’ll be doing before you start.

2. You must specify what kinds of expressions of unwillingness are okay to ignore.

3. You must identify the specific activities and how intense they will be, which requires being informed about the risks.

4. You must agree to a safe-word or gesture that will withdraw permission.

Consent for Sex is Not affirmative consent because of this:

- (ii) Consent may be express or **it may be inferred from behavior**—both action and inaction—in the context of all the circumstances.
- (iii) **Neither verbal nor physical resistance is required** to establish that consent is lacking, but their absence may be considered, in the context of all the circumstances.

This is talking about body language, and context is things like, whether you’ve had sex with someone before or if this is your first time together.

When we compare this definition of consent to Under the new MPC Article 213, Section 10: Affirmative Defense of Explicit Prior Permission: You need explicit prior agreement to do specific BDSM activities; that consent needs to be risk aware and informed, not just “I’m game for anything”; and you need a safeword. This conforms to many of the current consent standards found in the kink communities.

What to do when you blow it

At some time in our lives, many of us have violated someone's consent. Even if you work hard at clear communications, and great negotiations, we all sometimes make mistakes. How you handle those mistakes is arguably the most important thing we do.

If you find yourself in a situation where you have violated someone's consent, injured, or harmed someone:

- **LISTEN:** It is sometimes hard to hear that we made a mistake. Our inclination is to defend ourselves and explain, and it doesn't serve anyone if we get defensive. This is us telling you that you are going to make mistakes, so please reconcile that now, so you don't make a problem worse later. The only question you should be asking at this point is "What can I do to support you?". Any question that includes making you feel better or asking them to take some responsibility is inappropriate.
- **REFLECT:** This is your mistake, and you need to own it. Reflect on how you could have avoided that, how you can avoid it in the future. How your process can change. This reflection ALSO includes understanding the point of view of your victim. Be clear, even mistakes and accidents have a victim. If you keep coming back to "But they...", you need to spend more time here. Don't minimize, don't dismiss, don't rationalize. STOP AND REFLECT about how YOU can change YOUR behavior.
- **MAKE AMENDS:** Talk to your victim. Ask how you can help. Be clear, your victim does not need to find a way for you to help. This is NOT about you. It is about them, and the damage YOU caused.
 - **Some of those may include:**
 - Paying medical bills/lost work
 - Giving them space
 - NOT attending events if they don't want to see you
 - Spending time with them to process if that's what they want
- **TAKE A STEP BACK:** Continuing about their lives like nothing has happened is the single biggest mistake we see the accused do. They continue to have scenes, go to parties, and have a grand time while their victim is dealing with what happened. Take a step back. STOP doing the things that got you into this. Take consent and negotiations classes. Take safety classes. Take fetish classes that cover your mistakes. Make a visible effort to educate yourself and find out how you can do it differently. Your step back should be commensurate with the damage you caused.

Other things:

- Resist the urge to justify yourself.
- Do not blame the other party or try to share responsibility when speaking to anyone. You can only talk about and focus on YOUR part.
- If there is a social media post about the incident, stay out of it. Do not further victimize someone by justifying yourself, telling that story, or trying to "fix it". If they need support to process what happened, let them.
- You don't get to decide when someone should be "over it".

REFERENCES

Tools and resources

NCSF Incident Reporting and Response

NCSF is a resource for the members of the kink, poly and Lifestyle communities and for people seeking information about them. If you engage in BDSM, fetishes or non-monogamy practices, and you are being persecuted or discriminated against because of it, please contact NCSF through the Get Help Now. If you need help removing kink or non-monogamy as a barrier to public services, please contact NCSF. If your group or business needs help with outreach to local officials, please contact NCSF. If you or your group needs help with a consent violation or sexual assault, please contact NCSF.

The issue must openly, directly, and specifically relate to BDSM, swing or poly activities between consenting adults; in other words, the problems you face must relate to or be caused from your involvement in BDSM, swing or poly.

NCSF is not legal aid, nor do we offer specific legal advice for individuals. NCSF is a resource for the members of the kink, poly and Lifestyle communities and for people seeking information about them. NCSF provides publicly available information on kink and nonmonogamy for consenting adults.

**<http://www.ncsfreedom.org/key-programs/incident-response-97241/ir-report-incident>
917.848.6544**

The Network/La Red

The Network/La Red is a survivor-led, social justice organization that works to end partner abuse in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, SM, polyamorous, and queer communities. Rooted in anti-oppression principles, our work aims to create a world where all people are free from oppression. We strengthen our communities through organizing, education, and the provision of support services.

HOTLINE:

617-742-4911 (voice) • 800-832-1901 (Toll-Free)

The Network/La Red's 24-hour hotline provides confidential emotional support, information, referrals, safety planning, and crisis intervention for lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and/or transgender (LGBQ/T) folks, as well as folks in SM/kink and polyamorous communities who are being abused or have been abused by a partner. We also offer information and support to friends, family, or co-workers on the issue of domestic violence in LGBQ/T communities. All

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hotline staff are trained in domestic violence, peer counseling, crisis intervention, and safety planning. You don't have to leave or want to leave your relationship to get support.

BDSM Checklists

Some examples so you can decide what works for you!

50 Shades of Curious: <http://50shadesofcurious.com/negotiation/>

Ranai: <http://ranai.wordpress.com/kink-resources/en/topics/checklists/>

Luna: <http://www.submissivguide.com/2009/07/bdsm-checklist/>

CEPE: <http://www.cepemo.com/checklist.html>

Jay Wiseman 16 points: <http://www.greenerypress.com/article4.htm>

Reading List

Specifically to BDSM:

CONSENSUAL SADOMASOCHISM: HOW TO TALK ABOUT IT AND HOW TO DO IT SAFELY: BILL HENKRIN

ON THE SAFE EDGE: TREVOR JACQUES

SCREW THE ROSES SEND ME THE THORNS: PHILLIP MILLER AND MOLLY DEVON

SM 101, A REALISTIC INTRODUCTION: JAY WISEMAN

PARTNERS IN POWER: LIVING IN KINKY RELATIONSHIPS JACK RINELLA

MAINSTREAM COMMUNICATION BOOKS

MESSAGES: THE COMMUNICATION SKILLS BOOK BY MATTHEW MCKAY PH.D., MARTHA DAVIS PH.D. AND PATRICK FANNING

TALK LIKE A WINNER: 21 SIMPLE RULES FOR ACHIEVING EVERYDAY COMMUNICATION SUCCESS BY STEVE NAKAMOTO, ROBIN QUINN AND JOE KOHL

THE COMMUNICATION SKILLS WORKBOOK BY JOHN J. LIPTAK, ESTER LEUTENBERG, CARLENE SIPPOLA AND AMY L BRODSKY

THE ART OF TALKING SO THAT PEOPLE WILL LISTEN: GETTING THROUGH TO FAMILY, FRIENDS & BUSINESS ASSOCIATES BY PAUL W. SWETS

COMMUNICATION SKILLS: IMPROVE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND LEARN HOW TO COMMUNICATE & INFLUENCE PEOPLE BY BRADLEY TUNNEY

THE DIALOGUE GAP: WHY COMMUNICATION IS FAILING AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT, FAST BY PETER NIXON

NEGOTIATION: COMMUNICATION FOR DIVERSE SETTINGS BY MICHAEL L. SPANGLE AND MYRA WARREN ISENHART

THE 7 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE BY STEPHEN R COVEY

ON ASKING QUESTIONS:

CHANGE YOUR QUESTIONS, CHANGE YOUR LIFE: 10 POWERFUL TOOLS FOR LIFE AND WORK BY MARILEE ADAMS

LEADING WITH QUESTIONS: HOW LEADERS FIND THE RIGHT SOLUTIONS BY KNOWING WHAT TO ASK BY MICHAEL J. MARQUARDT

THE ART OF ASKING: ASK BETTER QUESTIONS, GET BETTER ANSWERS BY TERRY J. FADEM

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS BY M. NEIL BROWNE AND STUART M. KEELEY

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THE HANKY CODE QUICK REFERENCE

COLOR	WORN ON LEFT	WORN ON RIGHT
BLACK	heavy SM top	heavy SM bottom
GREY	bondage top	Bondage bottom
BLUE, Light	wants head	Cocksucker
BLUE, Robin's Egg	69er	anything but 69ing
BLUE, Medium	Cop	Copsucker
BLUE, Navy	fucker (top)	fuckee (bottom)
BLUE, Airforce	pilot/flight attendant	likes flyboys
BLUE, Light w/WHITE Stripe	Sailor	lookin' for salty seamen
BLUE, Teal	cock & ball torturer	cock & ball torture
RED	fist fucker	fist fuckee
MAROON	Cuts	Bleeds
RED, Dark	2-handed fister	2-handed fistee
PINK, Light	dildo fucker	dildo fuckee
PINK, Dark	tit torturer	tit torture
MAUVE	into navel worshippers	has a navel fetish
MAGENTA	suck my pits	armpit freak
PURPLE	Piercer	Pierce
LAVENDER	likes drag queens	drag queen
YELLOW	pisser/WS	piss freak
YELLOW, Pale	Spits	drool crazy
MUSTARD	hung 8"+	wants 8"+
GOLD	two looking for one	one looking for two
ORANGE	anything anytime	nothing now (just cruising)
APRICOT	two tons o' fun	chubby chaser
CORAL	suck my toes	shrimper (sucks toes)
RUST	a cowboy	a cowboy's horse
FUSCHIA	Spanker	Spankee
GREEN, Kelly	hustler (for rent)	john (looking to buy)
GREEN, Hunter	Daddy	orphan boy looking for daddy
OLIVE DRAB	military top	military bottom
GREEN, Lime	dines off tricks (food)	dinner plate (will buy dinner)
BEIGE	Rimmer	Rimnee
BROWN	scat top	scat bottom
BROWN LACE	Uncut	likes uncut
BROWN SATIN	Cut	likes cut
CHARCOAL	latex fetish top	latex fetish bottom

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COLOR	WORN ON LEFT	WORN ON RIGHT
GREY FLANNEL	owns a suit	likes men in suits
WHITE	beat my meat (J/O)	I'll do us both (J/O)
HOLSTEIN	Milker	Milkee
CREAM	cums in condoms	sucks cum out of condoms
BLACK w/WHITE Check	safe sex top	safe sex bottom
RED w/WHITE Stripe	Shaver	Shave
RED w/BLACK Stripe	furry bear	likes bears
WHITE LACE	likes white bottoms	likes white tops
BLACK w/WHITE Stripe	likes black bottoms	likes black tops
BROWN w/WHITE Stripe	likes latino bottoms	likes latino tops
YELLOW w/WHITE Stripe	likes asian bottoms	likes asian tops
BLUE, Light w/WHITE Dots	likes white suckers	likes to suck whites
BLUE, Light w/BLACK Dots	likes black suckers	likes to suck blacks
BLUE, Light w/BROWN Dots	likes latino suckers	likes to suck latinos
BLUE, Light w/YELLOW Dots	likes asian suckers	likes to suck Asians
RED/WHITE GINGHAM	park sex top	park sex bottom
BROWN CORDUROY	Headmaster	Student
PAISLEY	wears boxer shorts	likes boxer shorts
GOLD LAME	likes muscleboy bottoms	likes muscleboy tops
SILVER LAME	Starfucker	Celebrity
BLACK VELVET	has/takes videos	will perform for the camera
WHITE VELVET	voyeur (likes to watch)	will put on a show
LEOPARD	has tattoos	likes tattoos
TAN	smokes cigars	likes cigars
TEDDY BEAR	Cuddler	Cuddle
DIRTY JOCKSTRAP	wears a dirty jock	sucks dirty jocks clean
DOILY	tearoom top (pours)	tearoom bottom (drinks)
MOSQUITO NETTING	outdoor sex top	outdoor sex bottom
ZIPLOC BAG	has drugs	looking for drugs
COCKTAIL NAPKIN	Bartender	bar groupie
KLEENEX	Stinks	Sniffs
KEYS IN FRONT	has a car	looking for a ride
KEYS IN BACK	has a home	needs a place to stay
HOUNDSTOOTH	likes to nibble	willing to be bitten
UNION JACK	skinhead top	skinhead bottom
CALICO	new in town	tourists welcome
TERRY CLOTH	bathhouse top	bathhouse bottom
WHITE w/MULTICOLOR Dots	hosting an orgy	looking for an orgy

Negotiation Subjects: Quick Reference

- Who: The particular people and what they bring to the table
- What: The details and roadmap
- When: Calendar and clock
- Why: Motivations and expectations
- How: Communication, safety, feedback

First CHECK YOURSELF before you negotiate!

Do a self-check before negotiating (or playing).

- Am I in a positive frame of mind?
- H.A.L.T.! Am I hungry, angry, lonely, tired? All of these can be a barrier to honest and fair negotiations.
- Is my judgment impaired somehow?

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Who

The Particular people and what they bring to the table

- **People**
 - Does anyone else need to consent to this negotiation?
 - If you are checking references, please make it clear that this negotiation is contingent on your completing that to your satisfaction.
 - Are there any significant others of either partner or how do those partners feel about the person playing with someone else?
 - Is it just the two of us?
 - Observers, personal DM's, spotters, Lifeguards, assistants
 - It is OK to agree in principle and then comeback with additional questions after you have researched!
- **Skills**
 - What are the relevant skill levels of everyone involved?
 - Large disparities need to be addressed
- **Intoxicants**
 - Know the risks!
- **Health Concerns**
 - Chronic Illnesses/injuries
 - Medications
 - Physical concerns
 - Disclose ALL medical, mental, physical conditions (i.e. joint issues, medical conditions currently being treated, PTSD or other psychological disorders, communicable diseases, medications, etc.)
 - Be prepared to answer questions and have solutions devised to deal with these issues.
 - Discuss your limits and make certain your partner understands why you require them.
 - What are today's health conditions? calorie intake, water intake, alcohol consumption, stresses, menstrual cycle, non-play injuries, tummy troubles, headaches, lack of sleep...and the list goes on!
 - And remember...Each day is a new day, so be flexible with yourself and your partner...and COMMUNICATE!

What

The details and road map

- **Roles**
 - Top/Bottom only or some other "role" in scene like Dom/Sub, Master/slave, school girl/head master etc.
 - Honorifics to be used (Sir, Ma'am, Daddy etc)
 - Protocol
- **Types of play**
 - INFORMED consent

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- Impact
- Sensual
- Sensory deprivation
- Bondage
- Psychological
- Theatrical
- Fear
- Others...
- (Negotiation checklists)
- **Anatomy of a scene**
 - Which toys, who brings them?
 - Who brings in the toys (pack mule!)
 - Who lays out the toys?
 - Who sets up the equipment?
 - Who cleans up afterwards?
 - Who packs up and carries the toys out?
- **Limits and boundaries: physical/emotional (humiliation etc) /relationship (Does anyone need to approve)**
 - What is a soft limit?
 - What will make a soft limit into a “Yes”
 - What is a hard limit or a deal breaker?
 - You need to know and express yours!
 - **Physical limits**
 - Pain, marks etc.
 - **Psychological**
 - Humiliation etc.
 - Top limits: YES! Tops can have limits as well.
- **Aftercare**
 - Who does the aftercare?
 - How much aftercare?
 - Specific requirements-how long, what someone needs and wants. WHO will do what?
- **BDSM gear and attire**
 - Whose toys are we going to use
 - Outfits/uniforms
 - Disposable clothing
 - Accessories
- **Sex (Define what sex means to this person)**
 - Sexual contact...
 - Fluid bonded or barriers
 - Penetration or not...penetrate what?
 - Who can touch whom? Where, how, when...

Communication and Negotiation

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When

- **Time**
 - Duration of the scene
 - Start
 - End
 - Who is keeping time?

Where

- **Location**
 - Public or private play?
 - Do you like to be “center stage” or do you prefer a quiet corner?
 - Where would you be most comfortable?
 - What kind of furniture do you prefer?

Why

- **Motivations: What’s the point?**
 - Is physical play part of a power exchange experience for you, or is it a sensual exchange between equals with no power exchange?
 - What kinds of experiences are exciting/HOT to you in your fantasy life or in a scene?
 - Is playing typically a sexual experience for you or is it something different?
 - I want top/sub space
 - My BDSM is empowering
 - Personal growth/cathartic
 - Experimenting
 - Just for fun!
- **Expectations & Needs**
 - This is play
 - I want top/sub space
 - My BDSM is empowering
 - Personal growth/cathartic
 - Experimenting

How

- **Communication in scene**
 - How will that be handled?
 - Unable to communicate?
 - A Top that sticks to what was originally negotiated, even when the bottom wants more during the scene.
 - A bottom that realizes that the negotiated scene has exceeded their limits and can communicate this to the Top.
- **Safety**
 - Focus can shift to playing/BDSM activities instead of safety issues
 - What do YOU need to feel safe?

Communication and Negotiation

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- Equipment
- Limits of equipment
- Safe words/call/signal
- Know layout of space
- Specialty play concerns, i.e. fire and electrical
- **Accidents**
 - Scenes go wrong. Even the most prepared and experienced people make bad decisions, or just have bad luck. Being prepared if something goes wrong can make the difference between everything working out and having a tragedy on your hands.
 - Both parties must agree that any accidents, miscommunications, etc will be handled in a mature/constructive manner.
 - What to do in case of emergency: Your index card.
 - Legal name
 - Date of Birth
 - Medical Conditions
 - Medicine they are taking
 - Allergies
 - Who to call in case of emergency/hospitalization
 - When/what they last ate (include things like energy drinks)
 - Any significant risk factors in their day (alcohol/drugs/heavy stress/medical incident)
 - It is OK to take a piece of paper before your scene and write these down. Keep 3x5 cards in your toy bag! If your partner is uncomfortable with your having this information, just have them write it down and put it in their purse/wallet/bag so you know where it is, but you don't have it unless you need it!
- **Follow up and Feedback**
 - Keep in mind that needs/desires change over time, and can change from day to day
 - Discuss how it went for you (Remember to be honest)
 - 3x3 as an example
 - What would you have liked added to the scene