

# **The Collected Writings of Subversive Submissive**

2006-2010

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## So Long, and Thanks...

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2010/02/27/so-long-and-thanks/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2010/02/27/so-long-and-thanks/)>

**Date:** February 27, 2010

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As most people following this blog have probably figured out by now, I'm pretty much calling it quits. I'm really grateful for the past few years I've had writing here, and in particular for the readers who have taken the time to write to me and to comment — your support and appreciation has meant more than I can say.

My writing in general has been put on hold because a number of other projects have taken precedence. Overall, it's been a really positive thing for me to step away from this (and other writing projects). I'm now fostering relationships with people I love, learning new skills, becoming stronger and healthier, feeling challenged in really positive ways, and returning to things I've set aside for far too long. With writing (here and elsewhere), I've always felt a certain pressure — I feel positively *guilty* when I'm not working on something, not creating something. Right now, I don't feel that sense of guilt. It's very freeing, to be able to enjoy something and not immediately feel compelled to document it.

...but I know I can't avoid that feeling for too long, of course. I already feel the pull back to a screenplay I wrote a first draft of a year ago. I'm reading a fantastic book on a pet subject of mine, and I inevitably turn to thoughts of interviewing the author for a magazine I've written for in the past, or perhaps even writing a follow-up book on the subject incorporating some new ideas and...no. Not now; not yet. Now I need time for day-to-day life, for friends, for playing games and music, for collaborating with others, for *having fun*, for absorbing ideas and words instead of generating them.

I might return to this some day. In particular, I'd love to return to the zine format and come up with "Issue 2" of Subversive Submissive. Right now, though, it's time to put this aside for other things. Thanks again to everyone who's read this over the years, and don't hesitate to email me if you'd like: subversivesub at gmail dot com. So long.

## Thoughts on “Play”

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/10/27/thoughts-on-play/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/10/27/thoughts-on-play/)>

**Date:** October 27, 2009

**Topics:** homo ludens, play

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*Here, then, we have the first main characteristic of play: that it is free, is in fact freedom. A second characteristic is closely connected with this, namely, that play is not “ordinary” or “real” life. It is rather a stepping out of “real” life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own . . . . Nevertheless . . . the consciousness of play being “only a pretend” does not by any means prevent it from proceeding with the utmost seriousness, with an absorption, a devotion that passes into rapture and, temporarily at least, completely abolishes that troublesome “only” feeling. Any game can at any time wholly run away with the players. The contrast between play and seriousness is always fluid. The inferiority of play is continually being offset by the corresponding superiority of its seriousness. Play turns to seriousness and seriousness to play. Play may rise to heights of beauty and sublimity that leave seriousness far beneath.*

—Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*

## October 29: Playing with Power: Anarchist Approaches to BDSM

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/10/23/october-29-playing-with-power-anarchist-approaches-to-bdsm/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/10/23/october-29-playing-with-power-anarchist-approaches-to-bdsm/)>

**Date:** October 23, 2009

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Folks in the Bay Area: I'm facilitating a workshop next Thursday (10/29) on anarchism and BDSM. It's in Berkeley, it's free, and there will be cupcakes.

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This month, we'll have a facilitated discussion of what it means to practice BDSM as an anarchist. On the one hand, we have anti-BDSM arguments proclaiming that any type of BDSM play gives legitimacy to domination and submission as models for human relationships, and on the other, we have BDSM players who assert that anything they do and say is absolved by the fact that it turns them on. Some celebrate BDSM as a way to play with power, turning it on its head and perverting it for our own pleasure; other kinky folk are staunchly opposed to the idea of BDSM as merely "play," and see "dominance" or "submission" as deep, constant aspects of their personality. If we are anti-hierarchical, can we also engage in (or support) relationships that are rooted in hierarchical models? Where do we draw the lines, if there are any to be drawn? We'll look at a bit of BDSM and leather history, touch on the second-wave feminist backlash against BDSM in the 1980s, and identify specifically anarchist arguments against BDSM as a practice and as a subculture—and we'll round it out with a discussion of concepts like "consent" and "play," to see how these elements might help us make sense of What It Is That We Do.

Thursday, October 29

8-10pm

at the Long Haul Infoshop

3124 Shattuck Avenue / Woolsey in Berkeley (2 blocks from Ashby BART)

The space is wheelchair accessible and there is an accessible, gender-neutral bathroom.

## Why I'm No Longer Outraged by Sexism

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/10/21/why-im-no-longer-outraged-by-sexism/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/10/21/why-im-no-longer-outraged-by-sexism/)>

**Date:** October 21, 2009

**Category:** Feminism, Kink Community

**Topics:** outrage, sexism, this week in kink

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I've been trying and failing to write something on this for weeks, now. I guess I'm just tired of pointing my finger and yelling "sexism!" every time I see it. There's just so much of it around me, every day, that I can't bring myself to get pissed off any more. I keep thinking of that self-righteous bumper sticker, "If you're not outraged, you're not paying attention!" But I've been "paying attention" to this shit since I was, oh, ten years old, and I find it harder and harder to become outraged by it — not because I've come to accept things as they are but because once you realize how institutionalized sexism is and how deeply fucked up our entire civilization is, nothing really shocks you anymore.

To get to the point, the issue at hand is an episode of “This Week in Kink”, a podcast put on by the folks that run FetLife. On this episode, which aired over two months ago, one of the guests invited on the show said the following:

I firmly and strongly believe that it is a woman’s role to be submissive to a man. . . . I think that women in the past couple of hundred years have gotten entirely too high on their own power and eventually need to be slapped in the fucking head and put in their place.

A couple of years ago, I would have crusaded against this man and against the people who run the podcast. (How dare they allow such a thing to be broadcast.) I’d have demanded an apology and a retraction. Today, my reaction is a sigh and a shake of the head. What an asshole. I browse the comments on their page and leave one of my own. And I’m done. Next.

I did a bit of link-hopping and read Maymay’s take on the issue, in a post called “Don’t You Fret, Sexism Is Alive and Well in BDSM.” His post addressed a lot of stuff I’ve also written about — basically, making the point that while anti-BDSM feminists are wrong in their assessment of “BDSM = patriarchy,” we should acknowledge that there is a lot of sexism in BDSM as a culture and in how a lot of people practice it.

He linked to a blogger named Delilah, who writes that what troubles her the most about this is not that it was said — there will always be bigoted, ignorant jerks in the world — but that “in the BDSM world, where we’re meant to be playing with power, subverting some traditional norms and amplifying others to erotic effect, there are people who still truly believe this kind of outright nonsense. Even worse, that someone with such opinions is such a strong voice in the community.”

To me, what this says is not that there is a troubling streak of misogyny or at least sexism in the BDSM scene, but that (as I’ve written before) the values of the BDSM scene are fairly mainstream. Rob may be more outspoken and brash about his sexism, and it comes coated with d/s-specific language, but I strongly sense that the root of what he’s saying here is actually what the majority of men and women think — that there are biological differences between men and women, that these differences create “natural” inequalities between the sexes in some ways, and that the feminist demand for equality goes against woman’s natural role in the world.

Of course, none of this means that I’m throwing up my hands and saying, “Well, if the rest of the world thinks I should be barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen, I guess I’ll start taking off my shoes.” I’m still angry. I still argue. But I’m not outraged; I don’t feel like I should expect the world to not be sexist, and that this individual person has just violated that unspoken agreement. I go out into the world expecting that most people I meet will have, on some level, an understanding of gender and gender roles that I do not share and that I feel is harmful to me in some way. I expect exactly the same thing when I encounter people in the BDSM scene. (The unfortunate difference, of course, is that within the world of BDSM, “this is my kink” can be used to justify stereotypes and prejudice, and thus people like Rob can speak a little louder than they would, perhaps, on the street.)

Perhaps I’m just having a very cynical day. But perhaps not.

## Non-monogamy, Intimacy, and Identity

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/09/20/non-monogamy-intimacy-and-identity/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/09/20/non-monogamy-intimacy-and-identity/)>

**Date:** September 20, 2009

**Category:** Non-monogamy, Relationships

**Topics:** Jealousy, Non-monogamy

What a roller coaster the past few weeks have been: a constant swinging between giddy optimism and completely crushing feelings of defeat. When the thought of my partner with “the other woman” isn’t invading my consciousness, I’ve been completely happy, both in our relationship and in the rest of my life: in my projects, in my relationships with others. When I’m suddenly, for whatever reason, reminded of her existence, I completely shut down, lose all interest in everything I’d been working on, and feel like withdrawing from all of my social circles. These changes can happen within a matter of minutes, from one mood to the other and then back again. It’s really wearing me down.

I’ve realized that the reason I have felt so profoundly hurt by my partner’s having sex with someone else is that my sexuality is an incredibly sensitive and deeply intimate part of my identity — which isn’t the case for him. It’s taken many years for me to be okay with not only my sexual identity as a submissive but just with the idea of myself as a sexual being at all; for most of my life, sex was something big and terrifying that I engaged in somewhat reluctantly and while holding a lot of myself back. In my family, sex was probably mentioned all of two or three times throughout my adolescence, and then only in combination with the words “don’t” and “be careful.” My memories of these brief conversations with my mother are marked by feelings of extreme discomfort, embarrassment, and fear — both on her part and my own. In fact, this could be said about any of my conversations with my parents around personal issues or problems. And as I got older, I mirrored this in my relationships with friends and others — avoiding discussions of serious issues; minimizing and dismissing emotional problems; lying about my scars during phases of self-injury; hiding the fact that I was at times unable to function because of depression, anxiety, and overwhelm; and never, ever talking about sex. In large part, this is still true today. Even with my trusted partner of four years, I often lapse into a headspace in which I can’t bring myself to actually voice the thoughts in my head, or sometimes even speak at all, when having conversations about difficult or highly personal issues.

All of which brings me to a paper on non-monogamy and identity that I recently read; it’s very academic, and I strongly disagree with parts of it, but it brings up some interesting points. Most significantly, the author writes that many (if not most) women in our society are taught to define ourselves in terms of our relationships with others, and specifically in terms of our (monogamous) sexual relationships. Because of this fusing of a monogamous person’s identity with that of her sexual partner, when the partner chooses to have a sexual relationship with someone else, the person feels that her identity is being changed in a way that she didn’t choose for herself. The author writes, “When the monogamous person says, of her lover, ‘I’m selfish; I don’t want to share,’ she may not necessarily be thinking of her lover as a child thinks of a toy or a bag of candy. She may rather be saying that she does not choose to share herself, to extend herself to include this new person, who is not a chosen part of her self-assumed identity.” It is a sort of “forced relating.” And as long as a person defines herself in part or exclusively in terms of her sexual partner, this sort of pain and vulnerability will continue. The real problem, the author argues, is neither monogamy nor non-monogamy but the idea that real emotional intimacy and identity can only be tied to the person or people you’re fucking; both monogamous and polyamorous people may feel that “sexual coupling defines and is the hallmark of closeness between human beings; that being sexual is being intimate; and that sex is almost the only route to warm physical contact between adults.”

And this leads to the big revelatory conclusion: The real solution to my issues with non-monogamy is not to just start dating other people myself (which I’ve considered), nor is it to cut myself off completely and regress to the hyper-independent ideal that I used to aspire to (which I’ve noticed myself already doing). The solution, or at least a large part of it, is to actually form intimate relationships with people I’m not having sex with. To let myself cry in front of my friends. To talk to people in person about the things I currently write about anonymously online. To learn how to touch other people without feeling awkward and uncomfortable. To not allow my sexual relationship to be the only outlet I have to get the love and affection and reassurance I need. I can’t stress how difficult these things are for me. But I’ve already begun testing the waters — and it’s not quite as hard as I thought it would be.

# First Steps

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/08/31/first-steps/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/08/31/first-steps/)>

**Date:** August 31, 2009

**Category:** Non-monogamy, Relationships

**Topics:** Non-monogamy, social awkwardness

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When my partner and I began making plans to open our relationship, we came to an agreement I thought was quite sensible: he'd give me two months, during which time I'd make an effort to start putting more work into my relationships with other friends, to start spending more time outside the house and with other people, and to start seriously investing myself in my own projects, again. I felt that all of this would enormously help me in being okay with the idea of my partner being with someone else; I need to first be okay with spending less time with my partner, and then be okay with him using that extra time to be with someone else.

A month has passed since then, and I think I've done pretty well. I've been feeling pretty confident about the two-month mark, a trip my partner was planning that would include visiting a girl he's interested in. I felt this would be a good first step — someone I didn't know, someone I didn't have to interact with socially, someone I knew wasn't in any way a threat to our relationship, because she lives halfway across the country. I felt like I was ready for that.

Then my partner decided he wasn't going on that trip. And I realized that I was tired of trying to ease my way into things, trying to take baby steps that were getting us virtually nowhere. I was actually looking forward to his traveling to visit this girl, because I've been anxious to see what it's going to really feel like, anxious to figure out whether or not I can actually handle this kind of relationship. So last week, I told my partner that I didn't want to put off the inevitable, and said that I wanted to just "officially" declare our relationship open.

For the past few days I've been teetering between "doing really well, considering," and "fucking miserable." On Saturday night, at a show, he ended up making out with a girl we'd both met relatively recently — he'd previously told me that he thought there was a mutual attraction there, so it wasn't all that unexpected. He did everything right: he made sure I knew, before he went to the show, that this girl was going to be there; he gave me lots of affection and reassurance; he didn't let things progress too quickly with the other girl, and made sure to talk to her about me and about our relationship; he let her know that this was a new thing for us, and that it might be difficult for me to deal with at first. He called me from the show to let me know exactly what had happened, and said we could talk it all over when he got home. And we did talk, and we both cried and held each other, and then we played a few games of Boggle. (Which actually made me feel far better and more normal than any amount of talking had been able to accomplish...)

The next day, the girl was over at our house for a regular Sunday-night event that we host; she's been coming regularly for a few months, which is how we met her, and it would have felt strange to me if she hadn't just shown up as normal. But I couldn't look at her, when she came in — not because I was upset with her, but because I just had no idea how I was supposed to behave. Should I take her aside to talk to her? Should I just say hello, smile at her to let her know that we're cool, and leave it at that? Should I act like nothing's happened? And how do I behave around her friends and roommates, who probably have some idea of what's going on?

I was expecting to feel jealous, isolated, left out. But that's not entirely what I'm feeling. More than anything else, I'm feeling awkward, unsure of myself, and worried about what other people are feeling and thinking. Instead of feeling abandoned by my partner, I'm finding myself feeling worried that this other girl will feel left out and hurt when my partner is affectionate with me in public but not with her. At the same time, I'm afraid of people knowing how painful this is for me, watching me to see if I'm



doing okay when we're all in the same room, asking me how I'm feeling. I think that to most people, I come across as an extremely together, sensible, healthy person. That's the face I've cultivated my entire life, because I've always been reluctant to show anything I consider to be weakness or vulnerability. And right now, at a time when I'm feeling pretty fucking vulnerable, my first concern is to keep up that protection, keep people from seeing what I'm feeling — even when I don't exactly know, yet, what it even is that I'm feeling. Even worse, because this particular girl is a part of my social circle, I'm afraid of showing or talking about how much this is hurting because I don't want to alienate her or make people feel like she (or my partner) is doing anything wrong. I don't want to make mutual friends feel awkward for being in the middle. Yet I also really don't want to keep pretending that I'm doing okay.

...and this is all the rush of everything happening in a matter of days, and I know that not everything needs to be resolved right away, that these things take time. I'm being buffeted by strange emotions and unexpected feelings, and until I can make some sense of them I expect that I'll continue to feel this self-consciousness, this not-knowing-how-to-behave. Looking forward to getting to the other side of this.

## Bondage and Oppression

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/08/26/bondage-and-oppression/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/08/26/bondage-and-oppression/)>

**Date:** August 26, 2009

**Category:** Kink Community, The State

**Topics:** art of restraint, bondage, midori

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Had a great conversation a few nights ago with Maymay, who's now living in my part of the world. (And how awesome to finally meet up in person with someone whose blog I've been reading for several years!) The bulk of our discussion was about the problems we both see in mainstream BDSM culture and trying to build alternative spaces, subjects which I've written a lot about and which I intend to write more about later. He mentioned having attended a recent event called "Art of Restraint" at Femina Potens, and I later ended up looking up what other people had to say about it. Sex educator and rope bondage expert Midori blogged about her contribution to the event, a performance art piece in which her bondage demonstration was interrupted and broken up by uniformed men. (Read the full story [here](#).) She writes:

*Lately I've noticed a definite increase in interest for bondage imagery, porn, entertainment and personal play that depict harsh incarceration, kidnapping and interrogation. I am not sure why this is, but it's happening. Maybe it's a war-weary culture's subconscious search for a coping mechanism, maybe it's over saturation of images and discussions of governing body violence, maybe it's a desensitized culture seeking stimulation... Maybe it's just another sexuality trend as they do come and go...I don't know. I am disturbed, though, that so many who enjoy consuming or acting out fantasy actions of detention and incarcerations don't seem to think of the reality of where these images come from. We chatter on about bondage is freedom and art and so on, but so often it just feels like lip-service to transgressiveness when we've nothing to struggle against. Maybe the fascination in bondage is the side affect of hermetically sealed safe lives in search of some signs of being alive? I just don't know.*

*A person hooded, on the floor, naked and cuffed.*

*If the only context or response that one has to this image is a fun Saturday night of role playing at the local kink party, are we starving our own humanity? I'm not saying that we should not play with our dark fantasies and archetypes, but we shouldn't lose sight of the real world human events that necessitate these narratives.*

The thing that's so interesting to me about this is how closely it resembles the argument that I've heard time and time again from radfems and anti-BDSM folks: we're playing with imagery that comes from real-world oppression, and we're not thinking about the implications of that. We are thus in danger of "starving our own humanity" by immersing ourselves in bondage-as-fetish, isolating our minds from the notion that someone bound and gagged could be anything but a person having some kinky fun. The difference, of course, is that where the radfems believe that *any* engagement with bondage or d/s play desensitizes us and helps support the patriarchy/oppression, Midori argues that we shouldn't give up playing with "dark fantasies and archetypes" but should instead simply increase our awareness of where those fantasies and archetypes come from, acknowledge that there *are* deeply disturbing real-world counterparts to what we do for fun.

For what it's worth, I don't agree with the idea that exploring bondage fantasies creates an immunity to recognizing real-world oppression — I think that immunity is deliberately *cultivated* by those institutions that profit from oppression — but it is really refreshing to see someone so immersed in mainstream BDSM culture articulating such a thoughtful critique of that culture. More, please.

## Talking about Relationship Problems with Potential Lovers

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/08/11/talking-about-relationship-problems-with-potential-lovers/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/08/11/talking-about-relationship-problems-with-potential-lovers/)>

**Date:** August 11, 2009

**Category:** Non-monogamy, Relationships

**Topics:** Non-monogamy, polyamory

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...so now I am actually seeking advice. Here's a question for polyamorous / non-monogamous readers: How do folks deal with the issue of talking about problems in your primary relationship with other people? Specifically, is it okay for you to talk to your other lovers about problems you're having with your primary partner? What about potential lovers, people you're attracted to or have flirted with? Why or why not? Does it depend on the nature of the problems?

This is a really tricky issue I've been thinking about recently, and I'm torn. On the one hand, it's devastating to think about my partner talking to someone he's interested in about problems he's having with me; on the other, if that person also happens to be a good friend of his, someone he's specifically gone to because he thinks she can give him good advice, it doesn't seem fair to deny him that outlet. But can that advice ever really be impartial if the friend is already a lover, or if the attraction is mutual? And how do you draw the line between "friend I'm attracted to" and "potential lover"? That is, I can't realistically expect my partner to never talk about relationship problems to *any* female friend he's attracted to...right?

Thinking about it for myself, too: any other person I would likely become involved with is going to be first a friend, because that's just how I like to form my relationships (I'm really not into "dating," per se). So it just makes sense that if I'm having problems with my partner, if I'm obviously feeling down, this friend might notice and ask me what's wrong — and then what? After thinking about this a lot, I think an ethical answer (for me) would have to be "I really appreciate your concern, but I don't want to talk about it right now." Here's why: while I'm sure I would be tempted to confide in this other person, I know that such confidence, especially when it comes to relationship problems, often fuels a particular intimacy. It would thus become more tempting, I think, to talk about problems like these with people I wanted to become intimate with, to consciously or unconsciously choose them as confidants rather than other friends. In past relationships gone sour, I have definitely found myself talking about problems with my partner to other friends I was attracted to, far more often than I talked about those problems

to any of my other friends. And I instinctively knew that it was a bad idea, that I was doing it not because those friends could give me better advice than others but because talking about my relationship problems with them would bring us closer. It's fucked up, but true.

This is why I feel especially jealous when my partner talks to friends he's attracted to about problems they're having with their boyfriends, when he consoles a potential lover about a breakup she's going through — and it's just worse, somehow, when he's talking to her about *our* problems, when he confides in someone he wants to sleep with that we might be breaking up. No matter how sincerely he believes that such conversations occur purely because of friendship and aren't influenced by his sexual or romantic attraction to her, I can't make myself believe it, because that hasn't been my experience.

Of course, there are some aspects of our current relationship problems that are absolutely necessary to talk about with potential lovers — for example, it makes sense that my partner should let the other person know that I'm struggling with all of this, so she'll know that at least at first, there will have to be a lot of restrictions on what they can do together because of my insecurities around non-monogamy. But then...it still hurts. This is a person I'm already jealous of, a person I already realize embodies certain characteristics my partner desires that I can't fulfill — identifying as non-monogamous is one of those things. When he tells her that I'm having a hard time with all of this, and she tells him that in her experience, trying to have a relationship with someone who isn't earnestly interested in being non-monogamous is a bad idea, I can't help but worry about what that means.

So...what do you think? Can you separate sexual attraction to a friend from conversations with that friend about relationship or romantic problems? Is this a common issue in polyamorous relationships, and can anyone direct me to existing resources discussing it?

## Remembering Why This Is Important

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/08/02/remembering-why-this-is-important/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/08/02/remembering-why-this-is-important/)>

**Date:** August 2, 2009

**Category:** anarchism, Kink Community

**Topics:** anarkink

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Last Thursday, I went to the monthly Anarkink meeting, and was dismayed to find only two other people: one a regular, the other a younger guy who was just visiting the area. I was frustrated at how many people have disappeared from the group, and as the three of us present started talking, I started to wonder why I was even bothering with this. Why try to keep a group going, I thought, if this is all it's going to be?

Of course, a night like that isn't what Anarkink *isalways* like; last month, our cane-making and -using workshop was incredibly fun and pretty well-attended. But there have been a few meetings like this over the past year, in which a few people end up sitting around a table without a lot to really talk about, with no real plan or purpose. It makes me doubt the necessity of the group, makes me think that there's nothing to be gained by continuing it.

It turns out that the kid who was just visiting had come from Asheville, North Carolina, and he told us that some folks there had recently hosted a flogger-making workshop (using old bike tubes). We talked about different things happening all over the country — the recent anarchist play party that happened in Chicago, and the workshops/parties that folks organized at the Crimethinc convergence in Pittsburgh. As we closed up the infoshop, I apologized for the meeting not being more exciting or interesting; he told me how glad he was that he'd come out for it, to simply be in a space where people were even talking about this sort of thing, to simply know that something like this exists. It seemed that he had never really been public about his interest in BDSM, and had always been afraid, like I had

been, like I continue to be, that others would judge and ostracize him (especially due to his involvement in a feminist collective).

And I realized, then, just how important this is — or can be, at least. Talking to him made me remember how I had felt after the first Anarkink meeting — that feeling that I wasn't alone, the feeling that it was all worth it just to be sitting in a room with other people like me. Sure, it's more fun when there's a lot of people there, when we have some exciting workshop or crafty activity or a movie to watch. But sometimes, it's just about three radical perverts sitting in a room together and knowing we're not alone.

## “Liberating Ourselves” Response Zine

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/06/24/liberating-ourselves-response-zine/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/06/24/liberating-ourselves-response-zine/)>

**Date:** June 24, 2009

**Category:** anarchism, Zines

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I recently wrote about an anti-BDSM zine written by an anti-civ anarchist, and mentioned that I'd talked to someone who's putting together a “response” zine. If you'd like to contribute to it — and folks who commented on that last post, this means you! — here's the info:

*I have begun compiling a response to the zine “Liberating ourselves in the boudoir” by Usul the Blackfoot. If you are unfamiliar with this zine and want to get a copy so you can write a response, go here.*

*We are looking for essays, art, photos, a creative name for the response, and maybe some plans for DIY toys.*

*You can send your responses to kaleandglitter at riseup dot net, and we ask that you title your email Liberating Sex, and that everything be sent in by August 15th.*

Also, I finally got around to putting my own print zine online. I compiled this from some of my favorite past blog posts and included a lengthy new essay as well. If you'd like to check it out, you can find it here.

## Lighten Up

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/06/18/lighten-up/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/06/18/lighten-up/)>

**Date:** June 18, 2009

**Category:** Coming Out

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Every time I've gotten stuck for words when someone (non-kinky) makes a comment about BDSM, I later think, “it would be so much better if I could just treat it lightly, act as if I don't care what they think, joke about it.”

Last night, someone visiting me and my partner: “You should just get a live-in submissive to do all the housework for you.”

Awkward silence.

My partner: “I don't think that's how it works...”

What I *wanted* to say: “Well, we already have a live-in submissive, but I really don't kink on housework.”

Of course, I didn't think of this until I was already walking away from the conversation.

If I could just say things like this instead of feeling so afraid, so terrified of what people think...it would all be so much easier. Joking about it, speaking as if it were the most normal thing in the world for me to be talking openly about being a submissive or a masochist — speaking from the assumption that the other person is totally okay with BDSM sexuality, and allowing myself to be surprised if they're not. Oh, you didn't think about the fact that you might be talking about *me*? Does that change things? Does it make you feel awkward for making that joke? Does it make you feel uncomfortable around me? If so, you're going to have to address that, now. It forces things out into the open, and once they're there, once we get the point of actually talking about these things, I can hold my own. I know the arguments, I know my positions and can defend them. That's the part I'm *good* at. If I can just get there, just break through that wall of fear preventing me from making the first step...

What am I so afraid of? That they'll think my being a sexual submissive means that I'm a pushover and a weakling in the rest of my life. What's the best way to get them to *not* think that? To be assertive and open about being a submissive. To preemptively disprove their notions about what a submissive is, what a masochist is. To speak with confidence — as if *I* were the one that was normal.

## Sexual Compatibility

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/06/10/sexual-compatibility/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/06/10/sexual-compatibility/)>

**Date:** June 10, 2009

**Category:** Communication and Consent, Relationships

**Topics:** sexual compatibility

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Ranat recently wrote a few posts dealing with her struggle to find a sexually compatible partner. And it made me start thinking about how sexual compatibility is so much more than labels like “straight/gay,” “kinky/vanilla,” or even “sub/dom” can cover.

Ranat wrote specifically of her frustration at how easy it is for vanilla people to find compatible sexual partners:

*I am profoundly jealous that these men [her vanilla friends] can walk into a room at any given establishment, and have a good chance of meeting someone who is sexually compatible. I am jealous that it is as simple as attraction > desire > pursuit > yea or nay.*

*I know it's not actually that simple. I know people with mainstream sexualities have just as many issues finding sexual relationships. But I think about how many sexually compatible people one of these men has met in his life. Probably hundreds. I've met three. And I am so. Terribly. Jealous.*

I wonder, sometimes, what I would be doing had I never met my current partner, or were we to suddenly break up. How would I go about meeting someone? What would my qualifications be — what would go to the top of the list? Would it be “must be a male dom who likes women?” Or would it be “must be vegan,” or “must have politics that are at least somewhat similar to my own,” or “must not be a sexist jerk”? What would I be willing to compromise on?

Now, granted, I have some advantages — being at least somewhat sexually dominant is a trait that has been taught to a \*lot\* of men in our culture, so finding this quality would be a lot easier than it would be for a dom woman, like Ranat, to find a submissive man. That is: even if I couldn't find a guy who's interested in torturing me, collaring me, or forcing me to lick his boots, I could probably find one who's totally okay with “rough sex,” pushing me down, and taking control. I could get at least some of my needs filled.

And then I wonder — just how much more compatible would a random dom or switch man be for me, even just speaking in terms of sexual compatibility? What if random “vanilla” guy A is not interested in whips and chains, but completely overlaps with my desires when it comes to favorite positions for

fucking and has a really passionate, intense energy; and random “kinky” guy B loves to do all manner of painful things to me but is a terrible kisser and only likes to fuck in one weird position that does nothing for me? What if guy A wants to have sex 3-4 times a week and guy B wants to have sex once a week at most? What if guy B fits my criteria as a male dom who likes women, but his kinks are all completely different from mine — say he only likes daddy-daughter or “punishment” scenes with lots of roleplaying, which I really can’t get into. Does that make him any more sexually compatible than the man who isn’t interested in any kind of kink? And again, once we’re out of the bedroom (or dungeon...whatever), what are the chances that random kinky guy is going to be someone I can actually have a conversation with, as opposed to the vanilla guy that I’ve met because we have shared interests beyond sex? Yes, maybe it’s not that easy to meet someone who’s into BDSM at an anarchist convergence or a vegan potluck (though, actually...that is where my partner and I met). But it’s probably even harder to walk into a play party and meet someone in the mainstream BDSM scene who shares my gender politics, or who’s vegan, or who understands that “anarchy” is not synonymous with “chaos.”

All of this makes me feel extraordinarily lucky to be with someone who connects with me on so many levels, who is passionate *and* cruel *and* shares my kinks *and* is pretty much on the same page with me politically. But I think it’s really important to recognize that even though he’s way more compatible with me (sexually and otherwise) than most other men would be, nothing is perfect, and there are definite gaps where we don’t meet. Some of them are kink-specific, like the fact that he’s more interested in forced submission than I am, or that I’d like to have more frequent play sessions that just involved pain and/or bondage. Others are differences that you’d find in vanilla relationships, too — differences in favorite sexual positions, occasional differences in libido, differences in what we each need in order to have a good orgasm.

Sometimes I get really frustrated when my partner and I encounter one of these differences, and I have a sense of despair — *does this mean we’re just not sexually compatible?* What I need to remember is that true compatibility has more to do with how you work out differences than it does with never having any differences in the first place. I think this is especially important to remember as my partner and I begin to talk again about non-monogamy. There’s a danger of looking only superficially at compatibility as a simple overlap of interests, and thinking, “My partner and I are both vegan and kinky, but this other person he’s dating is vegan, kinky, *and* straightedge. She must be a better match for him than I am.” Or, “This other person loves anal sex, which I know my partner really likes and which I am not that into most of the time. That means he’s more sexually compatible with her than with me.” This sort of thinking leaves no room for important things like how we communicate, how we take care of each other, how we work through disagreements without getting into horrible fights that drag on for days. In the long run, I think it’s these things that matter the most.

## Liberating Ourselves in the Boudoir

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/05/24/liberating-ourselves-in-the-boudoir/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/05/24/liberating-ourselves-in-the-boudoir/)>

**Date:** May 24, 2009

**Category:** anarchism, Zines

**Topics:** against bdsm, liberating ourselves

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I’ve been struggling with a few long pieces that I’ve been writing. One of them is a response to a new zine called “Liberating Ourselves in the Boudoir: An Anarchist-Feminist Perspective against BDSM.” The author of this zine is an anti-civ anarchist, and his zine is just...well, I suppose you can read it.

Almost all of this zine simply rehashes the same old radfem arguments against BDSM that we've been hearing since the 80s, and it props up the same old straw man of the kinky person who loudly and constantly proclaims how *liberating* BDSM is, how radical and world-changing. Where the radfems use "patriarchy" in their arguments, insert "civilization" instead. It's really nothing new, and yet I feel compelled to challenge it, more so than if it were simply something posted on an anarchist website or in a comment on someone's blog. This is someone who put a lot of time and effort into creating a finished work, edited and designed. This is a zine that might be picked up and carried by zine distros. This is a zine that a friend might find and read and consider a legitimate viewpoint.

To me, Usul's arguments are completely specious and delusional — the entire thing is based on the faulty notion that BDSM is *the norm* among anarchists and radicals, and that we currently "[accept] BDSM as an inseparable aspect of human sexuality, as a universal presence in social spaces, as a given interest we all must have." He writes about BDSM as if everyone in the anarchist scene thinks it's totally cool, and he's one of the very few people speaking out against it. I read this, and I think, "Really? Where do you live? Sounds like that's where I should be..."

But then I start to wonder. I wonder if there are others who are disturbed by BDSM who don't ever speak up because they're afraid of coming off as oppressive or judgmental. I wonder how many people in my social circle would say the same thing — that they feel that acceptance of BDSM is the norm, and they feel uncomfortable about that. I wonder.

At any rate, I've talked to someone in Chicago who's putting together an actual zine in response to this one, and I'm working on an essay that she might include in it. I'll post it here when it's done. In the meantime, I'd love to hear what other folks think of this zine, especially other kinky anarchists.

## SF Weekly vs. Kink.com

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/04/24/sf-weekly-vs-kinkcom/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/04/24/sf-weekly-vs-kinkcom/)>

**Date:** April 24, 2009

**Category:** BDSM in the Media

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You'd think that living in the San Francisco Bay Area would mean that your local alt-weeklies\* would be a bit more open-minded when it came to alternative sexualities.

Check out this *SF Weekly* article about how, according to author Matt Smith, "California's government has been subsidizing torture-based pornography." By which, of course, he means that a few Kink.com employees have received training from a nonprofit called the Bay Area Video Coalition, which is funded in part by an agency called the California Employment Training Panel (ETP). The ETP was designed to "make state businesses more competitive with foreign and out-of-state ones by paying contractors who train in-state workers," according to Smith.

That *could* be the basis for an interesting story—what exactly does it mean to "make state businesses more competitive"? Which sort of businesses get this special funding, and which don't? Who are the contractors involved with the whole process? Who gets to decide where the money goes? The problem is that in order to spice up the article and turn it into an extra-shocking exposé, Smith sets up the piece with his "torture porn" lead and follows it up with, yep, more smearing of BDSM and BDSM pornography.

Because Smith's notion of a "hot story" also involved his asking the ETP about how much money they were giving to pornographers (and, I'm guessing, *why* they were giving it to them), the ETP ended up pulling their funding. According to Smith, "the government had been unaware that Cybernet was in the business of narrowcasting videos depicting sexualized torture."

The word “torture” is brought up multiple times throughout the article when referring to Kink.com, and Smith even brings in an anti-porn activist to compare Kink.com’s work to the torture at Abu Ghraib. (For no apparent reason; it doesn’t add anything to the piece, except to further represent Kink.com and BDSM as “torture.”) He then gives a bit of lip service to the legal issues of treating businesses that engage in pornography equally with other businesses:

*The stripping of Kink.com’s funding raises an intriguing question: Does the state’s refusal to train porn-makers violate constitutional free-speech guarantees? I’m not joking. Some serious and credible people says it’s worth considering whether it’s legal to deny training to porn workers merely because they film naked, shackled women with live electrodes clipped to their genitals.*

Can you *believe* it? Some people think that porn workers are workers, too! Silly people.

He also describes the “marketing mojo” of Kink.com:

*The company has passed itself off ... as a hip, if esoteric, high-tech media startup. Yet its business plan is more medieval than modern, consisting, as it does, of giving people money if they’ll agree to being on camera while being stripped, bound, impaled, beaten, and shocked.*

“Giving people money if they’ll agree to being on camera.” Because, y’know, there’s no possible chance that anyone could *enjoy* that; they’re just gritting their teeth and bearing it because they’re getting paid, right? What’s that? Go and interview some actual Kink.com models? Nah. Too much work.

Now, check out the response over here at the online newspaper SF Appeal. They point out that the BAVC training is not to support Kink.com in particular, but to train anyone who is going to then go on and work in multimedia production. The trainees in question don’t just work for Kink.com, but work on all kinds of other films as well. Interestingly, the SF Appeal notes that Smith himself has taken a whopping 184 hours of classes at the BAVC through the same program—despite the fact that his day job, at least, doesn’t involve multimedia production work.

In other news, I’ve reached the 70 page mark for my screenplay and am starting to think I might actually finish it in the next week...

## Opening Up

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/03/23/opening-up/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/03/23/opening-up/)>

**Date:** March 23, 2009

**Category:** Non-monogamy, Relationships

**Topics:** Non-monogamy, opening up, polyamory

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I first started becoming interested in non-monogamy about five years ago, for two very, very bad reasons: I wasn’t happy with the relationship I was in at the time, and someone new had begun flirting with me.

Too afraid to leave the relationship I was in (which I had convinced myself was the “right” relationship for me, one that would last forever) but unable to deny the fact that I was unhappy and needed *something* to change, I starting thinking that maybe there was just something wrong with me, that I was just wired differently and needed to love multiple people, that I could never be happy with just one.

Now, of course, I know that’s all rubbish. For me, at least. It was just a justification, for me, to place the problems of our relationship elsewhere, to chalk up my distancing myself from my boyfriend and our rapidly declining sex life to a *need* to be with other people.

While I was searching for validation of those justifications, I did a lot of online reading and picked up a few books as well (*The Ethical Slut* and *Redefining Our Relatinonships*). All of it did more to



frustrate me than entice me, because so much of it was vague, contradictory, and infused with a new-agey spiritualism. Sometimes people seemed to agree with my thought that “poly is an orientation,” that some people just needed to have multiple partners in their lives. Other times they seemed approach non-monogamy as some sort of “advanced” relationship model, vastly superior to monogamy and even politically radical—thus, something that everyone should aspire to, not something that some folks need and others don’t.

I eventually gave up, but not after I had really sent that relationship on a nosedive. When I started dating my current partner, we talked a little about our experiences with or impressions of non-monogamy, and both of us indicated that we weren’t really interested in doing that. And for three years, I was totally happy with our monogamous relationship.

Then, about eight months ago, my partner brought up the issue again. I was completely surprised, but my initial reaction was one of excitement and happiness, not fear or concern. I immediately recognized that unlike what I’d done in my previous relationship, he was starting to think about non-monogamy again not because he secretly wanted out of our relationship but because he felt a sense of security with me, because he felt that we could now trust each other enough to do it right. But then, a couple of really bad bouts of insecurity and envy (mostly due to another woman he’d expressed an attraction to) left me totally unprepared to actually venture forward with talking about what that sort of relationship would actually look like for us. My partner dropped the issue entirely.

Now, I’m starting to reconsider, and we’ve started talking about it again. Or rather, talking about talking about it. (Sheesh.) My partner borrowed a copy of *Opening Up* by Tristan Taormino, with the idea that we’d both read it and then start out by discussing it. It’s fantastic, everything I wish I could have found five years ago. (It also helps that it’s *extremely* kink-friendly, to the point that I think a non-kinky person reading the book would probably be a little confused by how prevalent discussions of BDSM are in the book.) It lacks both the “the only real/good non-monogamy is polyamory” of *The Ethical Slut* and the gushing “non-monogamy is radical!” rhetoric of *Redefining Our Relationships*, providing a wealth of information of all kinds of non-monogamy styles, common problems people face, and the important questions to ask before opening up a relationship.

(More to come once I finish the book...)

Meanwhile, as for my specific fears around opening up my current relationship: I’m realizing that I could never be one of those people who simply says “I don’t want to know.” I not only want to know, I want to *meet* the person. Or at least, I want to know about them. Specifically, I need to be reassured of their flaws—any flaws—and weaknesses, so that they become human to me and not the “perfect match” for my partner that I know I would fear each and every one of them to be. That woman I mentioned above, the one I was so terrified by my partner’s attraction to? I’ve gotten to know her better since then, and guess what—that sense of intimidation, that fear, is completely gone. That isn’t to say that I feel a total lack of jealousy if I think about him fucking her, but that it isn’t overwhelming, as it once was. It’s really interesting to feel that change.

## The “Bondage Awards”

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/03/21/the-bondage-awards/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/03/21/the-bondage-awards/)>

**Date:** March 21, 2009

**Category:** Feminism, Kink Community, The Scene

**Topics:** bondage awards, sexism

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Through Bitchy Jones, I stumbled onto the Bondage Awards website, and good god, is this a perfect example of the sort of sexist & heterosexist crap that makes it so fucking hard to defend BDSM when

arguing with non-kinky feminists. I mean, to take the words of a certain radfem blogger, they're making it too easy.

Take a look at that page. Does it give you any indication that not all bondage models are female, not all riggers and photographers are male, not all women are submissive, and OH YEAH not everyone is fucking straight? Nope.

Now, you'll notice that on the home page there's a post indicating that there have been a number of people writing in to him about the sexism/heterosexism issue. Here's the response, summarized:

I didn't intentionally make it sexist. I just looked through my photo collection and picked out some pictures I liked. Also, last year the awards got great feedback, and *not one person* suggested that gender neutrality was important. So let's not talk about it any more and just have fun, because that's what this is all about, right?

Sigh.

As Bitchy points out, probably next year they'll just include a couple of busty women with whips and absurdly high-heeled boots and call that "gender equality."

The thing is, after getting really upset about this last night, I came to the realization that this person's website is actually just sort of sad. It's an egotistic attempt to place himself (I'm guessing this is a single dude running the site) at the center of the bondage porn industry by working this annual "bondage award" thing up to be a well-recognized event. The stuff that makes me angry about the website is really no better or worse than pretty much any other fetish website out there. And that, really, is what I should be upset about.

Sex in our culture is so, so broken.

## Crashing and Recovering

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/03/17/crashing-and-recovering/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/03/17/crashing-and-recovering/)>

**Date:** March 17, 2009

**Category:** Coming Out, Public Play

**Topics:** anarkink party, managing stress, organizing

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Okay, so I've had a few days now to actually sit back and start processing everything that happened on Saturday, and it isn't all of it good. I've now heard from several people about some bad stuff that went down at the party (mostly involving inappropriate behavior / nonconsensual touching) and am actually sort of surprised that nothing worse happened. Folks in the Anarkink group have started talking (okay, emailing) about what was good and what we need to do better, and most of it has to do with being clearer on boundaries and such beforehand, keeping our invite list restricted, making sure people are monitoring scenes, checking people who are out of line, and providing safer sex supplies. All of which is good, and all of which is stuff I'm sure we would have done had we been planning a play party. Which we weren't; we had planned a fundraiser party, a dance party that featured some performances and a spanking booth. We just hadn't planned for the event turning into a play space, and weren't prepared for what to do when it did happen. That said, I still think people did a really good job under the circumstances.

As soon as I let myself relax, after the party was over, I completely crashed both physically and mentally; I'm now fighting an awful cold and have spent the last three days since the party largely in bed or curled up on the couch under a blanket. I keep lapsing into crying fits that appear out of nowhere. The thought of any sort of responsibility, any task to accomplish, any project, fills me with renewed anxiety.

Honestly, it wasn't so much the work involved with these events—though that did factor into it—as the emotional stress of, well, being out. For nine hours I sat with some stacks of zines and buttons and answered questions like “Anarkink? What’s that?” or “So what’s with the blue and black star?” I didn’t encounter any real drama, nor did I end up having real conversations with anyone about BDSM or why it’s important to talk about it. And when I noticed the two friends that I’m most scared of being out to walking around near where I was tabling, I stood up and pretended like I wasn’t tabling, but looking at zines at the table next to me. So in terms of *really* confronting my fears around being public about this sort of thing, I only made it about halfway. And I *still* felt completely fucking destroyed by it.

I know that it was all worth it. I now have a handful of friends that know about Anarkink and my involvement with it, so by extension that know (and are ostensibly okay with the fact) that I’m kinky. I helped make more people aware that Anarkink existed, which will hopefully bring more folks into the group, get a wider variety of faces and voices and perspectives, and get more ideas about what this group should and could become; ideally, this will also mean that we’ll have more people who can take over the organizational aspects of keeping the group going. And we also raised a couple hundred bucks to donate to the Long Haul Infoshop, our new meeting space, which should cover us for the next year.

But right now, it’s really hard for me to want to do any of this at all. We’re meeting again next Thursday, and I honestly don’t even know if I want to go. I was excited about the idea of starting up a small distro for kinky zines, and now I have little interest in it. I was even starting to consider contacting other people to help organize a KinkForAll in San Francisco, but after this event, I’m not sure I could handle it. I sort of want to just get back to having sex, in private, and just being happy with that.

I know in a week (or maybe even less) I’ll feel completely differently. But it’s going to take some recovery time.

## People Are Amazing

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/03/15/people-are-amazing/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/03/15/people-are-amazing/)>

**Date:** March 15, 2009

**Category:** anarchism, Kink Community, Public Play

**Topics:** anarchist bookfair, anarchist play party, anarkink

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The Anarkink party last night went so far beyond what I was hoping it would be. Seriously. It was really diverse, a lot of people were playing (we hadn’t actually advertised it as a play party, so I wasn’t really expecting that), and there were a lot of people interested in what we were doing and in helping to make stuff like this happen more often. A couple of times I saw people mentoring other people who were curious but had little or no experience, which was really cool to see. I overheard a conversation between two people I didn’t know in which one person was explaining the idea of d/s relationships to the other; I saw someone coaching another person through his first attempt at flogging. I saw people making and keeping boundaries. And even though we hadn’t planned for a play party and thus had no defined “monitors” or DMs, I also saw people stepping up to help keep peoples’ scenes safe and, especially, keeping folks from intruding on others’ scenes.

One important lesson for future parties, though: make sure the party flyer specifies **no dogs**. (Seriously, how did we think that we could advertise a party at the anarchist bookfair and *not* get at least three crusty punks showing up with their dogs?)

I came really close to playing at the party, but am glad that I didn’t; I’d been up since 7am and was working on just a few hours’ sleep, so it probably would have been a bad idea. The reason I didn’t play, though, was not really exhaustion but inhibition; I’m still just really, really scared of letting myself be publicly seen like that, even among people for whom watching their friends get flogged and fucked is

totally normal. Feeling shy about public play makes me feel really self-conscious, like I'm somehow not really a part of things, like I'm being prudish and not "liberated" enough or something. It's a ridiculous fear, I know; there's absolutely nothing wrong with not wanting to play in public, and I shouldn't feel pressured to do so. But I still do...perhaps I just feel if I could let go of my self-consciousness that much it would just sort of be a milestone, a real indicator that I've gotten past the inhibitions around sex that I've been trying to discard for so many years. I know I shouldn't feel ashamed for the fact that I'm still dealing with those inhibitions, though. I guess that's the first step...

## A Challenge

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/02/28/a-challenge/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/02/28/a-challenge/)>

**Date:** February 28, 2009

**Category:** Coming Out

**Topics:** Coming Out, personal challenge

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After the Anarkink meeting the other night, I casually mentioned to someone that I really love flogging, but can't do it as much as I'd like because my roommates are often home. The person I was talking to was shocked. "You're in the closet with your roommates?"

"Uh....yeah."

"But is that really tenable?"

"Well....no, I guess not..."

"I mean, I can understand not being out to your mother or something, but it seems like that's something you'd want the people you live with to be comfortable with..."

The question of just how out I should be has been coming up a lot recently, and with increasing frequency as the Anarchist Bookfair approaches. I have taken on this project of ensuring Anarkink's presence at the bookfair, and that means me sitting there among hundreds of other anarchists and probably a good number of my friends, handing out flyers for an anarchist BDSM party and selling kinky zines. It means me explaining what BDSM is to curious people and defending it from angry ones. It means me having to talk to my friends about this anarchist BDSM group I've been involved with for months.

It scares the shit out of me just thinking about it.

And yet I still want to do it.

## Anarkink Party Details!

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/02/28/anarkink-party-details/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/02/28/anarkink-party-details/)>

**Date:** February 28, 2009

**Category:** anarchism

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Okay, one more announcement for this...if you're in the Bay Area on March 14th, come to this party! (And if you want to help out with the party or at the Anarchist Bookfair during the day, let me know...)

# Kinky Anarchist Group

For anarchists  
who love BDSM

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for more info: [subversivesub@gmail.com](mailto:subversivesub@gmail.com)

# Sexism in BDSM

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/02/23/sexism-in-bdsm/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/02/23/sexism-in-bdsm/)>

**Date:** February 23, 2009

**Category:** Feminism, The Scene

**Topics:** sexism, sexism in bdsm

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I wrote earlier that I wanted to talk about consent and choice and how they are and aren't relevant to a feminist reading of BDSM, and I still do, but all of this arguing has led me to something that I think is really important to recognize first:

A lot of people who engage in BDSM are sexist.

Pretty simple, right? This is something we can totally agree upon with the radfems. Here's the big difference, as I see it. (Some of this taken from comments left elsewhere...)

From the anti-kink perspective, BDSM is a product of the patriarchy and is thus inherently sexist. Because BDSM is inherently sexist, we mainly see maledom-femsub pairings in which men get whatever they want from the women who serve them because they have been socialized to submit.

From my perspective, BDSM is a product of human sexuality and its wide variety of expressions and is not inherently sexist nor inherently feminist. Because we live in a sexist and heterosexist society, we mainly see maledom-femsub pairings, while any other combinations, including those involving trans and queer folks, are marginalized; and female dominants are largely still expected to be fetish objects for submissive men. (Or they aren't really thought to exist.) Also because of the sexist culture in which we are socialized, there are a lot of men (in general) who are accustomed to getting what they want from women, and there are a lot of women (in general) who have a hard time saying "no" and sticking to it. This means that within maledom-femsub, there exist male dominants who expect all women to defer to them (if not to submit entirely) and women who find it difficult to negotiate or leave relationships. Unfortunately, it is often tricky to address or see sexism at work in BDSM relationships, because it's hard to tell how much is "fetish" and how much is "what I really think."

...so the big difference, of course, is that I think (and I imagine a lot of folks reading this think) that sexism and abuse found in the BDSM scene isn't any different than the sexism and abuse found outside of it — it's just that sometimes, and especially when people are very new to BDSM, kink can be used as a mask to hide sexism for what it really is. (Of course, all sorts of things can be used to mask sexism outside of kink culture, and it's a cliché that love can be used to mask abuse in any relationship.)

The actual things that we do are not the problem. It is the way that we approach and relate to what we do. The problem is not dominant men who enjoy activity X, but dominant men who say things like "well, if you don't enjoy X then you're not a \*true submissive\*." The problem is not that submissive women eroticize Y, but that some submissive women do Y even when they're really, truly not wanting to do it, because they feel like they're being "bad" if they safeword or refuse. The problem is not dominant men who seek out submissive women to play with or to form relationships with, but dominant men who assume every kinky woman they meet is in need of a strong man to teach her about her deep submissive urges (regardless of whether or not she identifies as a dominant or submissive). It is not a problem if a submissive woman likes being whipped, but it is a problem if she doesn't have some sort of basic control over when and how she is being whipped.

Of course, as I said earlier, this argument only makes sense if you can get beyond the idea that BDSM is created by the patriarchy, and that any act that inflicts pain on another person or that eroticizes power is "patriarchal" and thus bad. But that's another argument, I suppose.

## Acknowledging Diversity

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/02/20/acknowledging-diversity/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/02/20/acknowledging-diversity/)>

**Date:** February 20, 2009

**Category:** Feminism, Kink Community

**Topics:** bdsm wars, diversity, ideology, radfem

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I *really* need to stop reading the trainwreck over at “Rage against the Manchine,” but I just needed to talk about a comment that Charlie left:

*Can we agree that some (or even many) BDSMers are playing out their heteronormative patriarchal ideologies through their sexual practices? Can we agree that some (or even many) non-BDSM folks do the same? And can we leave room for the possibility that not everyone does that? Or do you need to see the patriarchy as even more hegemonic than it actually is?*

*If you can make space for the possibility of diversity in how people engage in BDSM with respect to socio-cultural gender roles, then there’s room for us to explore how that plays out in the lives, minds and hearts of the people involved. If you’re not willing to even acknowledge the possibility, then there isn’t any space for us to examine the diversity that I and other people have experienced and reported.*

This really gets at the heart of the matter, I think, and explains why these debates are so frustrating: the inability of radfems to acknowledge that the effects of patriarchy vary from person to person based on experience and a host of other factors (race, class, sexual orientation, etc). They draw their conclusions about BDSM based on popular media imagery, pornography, and “theory,” and dismiss any examples of *real people who do BDSM* who don’t fit in with their idea of what BDSM is. They throw out the female dominants and male submissives, and refuse to even *touch* the issue of trans or genderqueer folks involved in BDSM. They engage in intense gender essentialism when it comes to characterizing what female submissives and male dominants are like, suggesting that we subs must be mentally ill, weak, passive, co-dependent, and generally uninterested in BDSM until our male partners suggests it to us; and that male doms are overly aggressive, hold all the power in the relationship, and always initiate sex or BDSM play. They straight-up ignore submissive women and dominant men who very plainly counter those stereotypes.

This is how it is possible, I think, for them to steadfastly maintain the belief that BDSM is inherently abusive and a hindrance to women’s liberation. There is no room in their theory for the diversity of the people who engage in BDSM — who we are, what we do, and why we (think we) do it — and until there is, I don’t think there’s any point in trying to debate them.

## Learning How to Fight

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/02/17/learning-how-to-fight/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/02/17/learning-how-to-fight/)>

**Date:** February 17, 2009

**Category:** Communication and Consent, Feminism, Kink Community

**Topics:** anti-bdsm, Feminism, radfem

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I take it back. I *do* know why I keep doing this. I do it because it challenges me, and because in the process of defending my sexuality, I become more secure in and at home with who I am and what I desire. Participating in those comments threads gets me reading other bloggers and gets us starting our own conversations. I participate because it makes me happy to support other kinky folks when they

are being ridiculed or condemned, and it makes me happy to hear the voices of other kinky folk who have \*my\* back as well.

I also do it because sometimes, I need to remember why the anti-kink folks see BDSM the way they do, and to better understand their position so that when I find myself under attack, I can better defend myself in a way that might actually get through to them. On the Internet, I pretty much think it's always a waste of time to try and change someone's mind about this stuff. But I feel I can use these online skirmishes to practice my own defense for the inevitable battles I will have to fight with friends and loved ones. I'm not particularly out, at the moment, but someday, the time will come when a family member finds this blog, or a friend asks me about the o-rings secured to my loft bed frame, or a roommate comes home early and hears whipping noises coming from my room. And I realize that the more secure I feel in my ability to verbally defend myself, the less scared I'll be of someone finding out about my sex life and the more open I'll be able to feel with my friends.

One thing that I've come to realize is that simply shrugging off demands to "examine my desires" isn't the best way to deal with things. Oh, don't get me wrong — it's what I *want* to do, of course. My gut reaction to those who suggest that I haven't "examined my desires" is a resounding "fuck you," because let's face it: most of us have done a hell of a lot of self-examination (and often a lot of self-hating) when it comes to our sexuality, and to suggest that we haven't done so really trivializes the process we have all had to undergo in order to be able to speak openly about our desires in the first place.

But as right and justified as I might be to respond in this way, it doesn't really get me anywhere if I'm earnestly trying to argue about this issue with someone.

So. First of all, I want to look at some of the responses that I most frequently hear from kinky folks when attacked by anti-kink people: consent, choice, and pleasure. (To be discussed in my next post...)

## When It All Works

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/02/12/when-it-all-works/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/02/12/when-it-all-works/)>

**Date:** February 12, 2009

**Category:** Relationships

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Last night, after an amazing few hours of playing and fucking, I sat with my head on my partner's leg and said, "This is so good. I love it when everything just *works*."

It's important for me to remember these times, because everything isn't always so simple. We don't always read each other perfectly. Our respective dom/sub levels aren't always at the same place. We aren't always as present and communicative as we should be, and sometimes we both make mistakes.

It's important for me to remember the times like last night, when I'm able to manage just the right balance of letting myself bliss out on pain and keeping my wits about me enough to still be able to talk, when we can play hard and yet still laugh, when minor mistakes don't faze or scare me. When it all just feels amazing and right.

I've been shifting around in my chair all day at work, feeling the slight itch of the welts on my ass, and every time I go to the bathroom I take a moment to peek in the mirror at the rich purple patches covering my skin. Until they fade, I'll smile every time I see them, remembering how perfect things can feel.

## I Don't Know Why I Keep Doing This

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/02/08/i-dont-know-why-i-keep-doing-this/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/02/08/i-dont-know-why-i-keep-doing-this/)>

**Date:** February 8, 2009



**Category:** Coming Out, Feminism

**Topics:** anti-bdsm, radfem

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It depresses me to realize that there are *\*still\** feminists who think that people like me are simply misguided tools of the patriarchy, and that people like my partner are misogynistic rapists who should kill themselves.

It depresses me to realize that nothing I can possibly say will ever convince them otherwise.

It further depresses me that they can get away with as much ridicule and condemnation of my sexuality as they want in the name of “examining” it or “considering the implications” of it, and will then have the audacity to say that they’re not trying to *blame* me or tell me that I should stop having sex.

And it *really* depresses me that I’ll probably never be able to keep myself from engaging with them and getting so pissed off about it that I stay up hours after I should be in bed trying to find some way to make them understand.

I need to remember that this is the Internet, and that blogs like the one I linked to above are not representative of all feminists everywhere. But it still scares me. This sort of thing is what sends me running back into the closet every time I start to feel like I might be able to handle living a life in which I’m completely open about who I am and what I want.

(More discussion on Nine-Deuce’s posts are over at SM-Feminist, [here](#) and [here](#).)

## SF Anarchist Bookfair Party

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/02/02/sf-anarchist-bookfair-party/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/02/02/sf-anarchist-bookfair-party/)>

**Date:** February 2, 2009

**Category:** anarchism

**Topics:** anarchist bdsm, anarchist bookfair, anarkink

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I am *very* excited about this.

Anarkink, the kinky anarchist group I’ve been involved with, is organizing a party for March 14th, the night of the Anarchist Bookfair in San Francisco. We’ll have dancing, a spanking/flogging booth, a confessional, a rope suspension demo, and hopefully some other demos/performances as well.

We’re also planning to have a blanket out front of the bookfair itself, during the day, where we’ll be selling zines, toys, buttons, patches, etc. and possibly teaching basic rope flogger making.

The money will all go to help Anarkink secure a regular meeting space and ensure that meetings and workshops can be free for everyone.

If you’re interested in helping with any of the following, get in touch!

- general volunteering at the party or bookfair (tabling)
- organizing a demo or performance at the party
- finding and printing/copying sex- or kink-related zines
- designing and making patches and buttons

(And spread the word...location/time info to follow as soon as it’s confirmed.)

## Repressed Emotion and Overwhelm

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/02/01/repressed-emotion-and-overwhelm/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/02/01/repressed-emotion-and-overwhelm/)>

**Date:** February 1, 2009

**Category:** BDSM & Psych

I wrote recently about a particularly cathartic experience—allowing myself to fully give up control, to let myself be hurt and to not try to make myself be okay, to let myself cry and just *let go*. On the other end of the spectrum, today I spent the entire morning crying uncontrollably, and the only thing that snapped me out of it was my partner simply touching my body in pleasant ways, keeping me warm, avoiding pain completely, focusing completely on my pleasure. In both cases—the pain in the first case and a pleasurable orgasm in the second—sex helped to release tension and stress that I tend to build up when I don't really deal with problems in my life.

This is an ongoing problem for me that I've only begun to really recognize over the last few years: I avoid anger, hide myself away when I'm depressed, refuse to ask for help, and force myself not to cry when I'm hurt or scared. All of it blends together and builds and builds until it bursts, and I break down. I retreat into my room for a day or two or three, cry uncontrollably, shake, lose the ability to speak coherently or understand anything around me. I try to shut everything out. Simply, I feel a sense of overwhelm, of everything in this world just being *too much* for me to deal with.

A while back, I started to consider the idea that perhaps this cycle of overwhelm was related to my frequent inability to have orgasms that were fully satisfying, that didn't just leave me feeling like my skin was crawling and I would never find true *release*. That is, perhaps my overwhelm/panic attacks would cease if I could only have truly satisfying orgasms on a regular basis. (Like today.)

Now, I'm realizing that orgasm is just one part of the bigger issue, which is that I don't actually know how to release tension, stress, anger, grief, and other emotions. Not fully. Not in a way that keeps their residue from piling up until I choke on it.

When I first began dating my current partner, one of the most difficult issues we had to deal with was that we have each lived with completely different ways of dealing with emotion. He's always been very forthcoming with his emotions—both good and bad ones—and finds it difficult, if not impossible, to *not* talk about it if he's upset, hurt, or needs help. I, on the other hand, grew up in a family in which problems, illness, depression, and conflict were just not ever discussed. Whenever they did come up, they created such intense awkwardness and discomfort—because none of us actually knew how to communicate emotions or talk about our problems—that it reinforced the lesson that it's better to keep things under wraps, to keep things “pleasant” and simple.

One of the ongoing challenges in our relationship has been to accept these differences; for me to understand that it's *healthy* to get upset when things go badly, and for him to understand that it's an ongoing struggle for me to ask for help or to talk about my problems and fears.

Anyway, getting back to the issue at hand—the point is that using sex to release emotions and stress, whether through pain and catharsis or through pleasure and orgasm, might work fine, but it would be better if *I just didn't let the stress build up in the first place*. It means that I have to learn how to cry in front of people, how to let people help me when I need it, how to talk about my problems to my friends.

Just one of those amazing revelations that seem perfectly self-explanatory and simple when I write them down.

## Cruelty and Catharsis

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/01/18/cruelty-and-catharsis/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/01/18/cruelty-and-catharsis/)>

**Date:** January 18, 2009

**Category:** BDSM & Psych, D/s, Smut

**Topics:** bdsm scene, catharsis, cruelty, D/s

In my bed I had been warm, but on the floor, I was shivering even with a blanket over me. I curled up, wanting to play but not wanting to leave the confines of the blanket, not wanting to suffer the coldness of the room or the discomfort of the floor.

I was tired and cranky. And as he pulled the blanket off of me and stood over me, I realized that the only way I was going to be able to play would be if my discomfort were a *part* of the scene, and if it were to be constant, unrelenting discomfort, unrelenting pain. I needed to be able to be cranky and to squirm and shake and cry, and for that to be okay, for it not to stop the scene.

“Can we not stop unless I safeword?” I asked him. “Of course,” he said.

(NOTE: This post contains explicit sexual imagery and descriptions of BDSM play.)

“I want you to be cruel,” I said, and he understood. He kicked me, stepped on me, forced his boot into my mouth, and hurt me until I was earnestly trying to crawl away. He pulled me up onto my knees by my hair and slapped my face. I felt a lump form in my throat, and I suddenly began to cry, violently, exhaling deeply from my stomach. My mind was spinning, confused by my reaction and by the fact that I wasn’t safewording.

He asked me a question and I didn’t understand, I couldn’t understand any of this. *I want to shut everything out and he won’t let me, he keeps pulling me out of myself, pulling out my breath and my sobs and my pain. And I feel like I’m going insane and I feel like that’s okay...*

I spoke nonsense, I jerked my head from side to side, I cried and moaned. None of it fazed him. And suddenly, it was gone, and I felt exhausted and limp.

“I think I’m done,” I said.

“You want to stop? Are you okay?”

“Yes. I’m okay. But I think I’m done.”

I let him hold me, and sat there quietly with him, slightly shaken, but feeling safe and...what was this? Content? Did I feel content? *What the fuck just happened? How is it that I was uncontrollably crying a few minutes ago, and now I’m feeling some sort of afterglow?*

I showered and got into bed with him. We curled up with each other, and I was amazed at how *normal* everything felt. For about twenty minutes, I had felt absolutely crazy, the sort of out-of-control crazy that I feel when I’m having an attack of overwhelm or panic or depression — but those attacks are unrelenting, lasting for hours or days, and leave me shaken to my core for even longer than that. This was like a condensed version, with a safety net. It was probably the closest I’ve ever felt to true catharsis.

## Let’s Take the Gloves Off

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/01/07/lets-take-the-gloves-off/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2009/01/07/lets-take-the-gloves-off/)>

**Date:** January 7, 2009

**Category:** BDSM in the Media, Feminism

Speaking of the real rape vs. rape play debate, check out Stacey May Fowles’s essay on the subject over here. It’s a piece written for a book called *Yes Means Yes*, published by Seal Press.

First of all, I have to admit that I don’t really agree with the premise of this book, which is that “creating a culture which values genuine female sexual pleasure can help stop rape.” That said, there’s a part of me that was thrilled to find a piece on this subject included in their anthology, especially one written from the perspective of a submissive woman who enjoys rape play. It’s hard not to simply be happy when you see something like this published by a feminist press and reproduced on a liberal website:

*However you attempt to excuse it, this inability to accept BDSM into the feminist dialogue is really just a form of kinkophobia, a widely accepted prejudice against the practice of power-exchange sex. . . . the best a submissive can hope for is to be labeled and condescended to as a damaged victim choosing submission as a way of healing from or processing past trauma and abuse.*

Yeah, don't really see that perspective in print too much.

But there's always a problem that emerges when people try to defend a controversial position or idea in a mainstream publication: they try to make it palatable. They lower the bar. They handle it too carefully. It's something I've noticed in my own writing, and it's something that I think is perhaps unavoidable — but it's always unfortunate.

In describing BDSM to her audience, Fowles sticks to “safe, sane, consensual,” focusing almost exclusively on the safety measures, rules, negotiations, and safewords that make sure that nothing bad happens. She doesn't mention the fact that the BDSM some people like to engage in *does* carry some degree of risk; that what constitutes “safe” play (or “sane” play, for that matter) is always a hotly debated topic in the BDSM world; that not every BDSM scene has to have a long negotiation beforehand; or that the meaning and use of safewords can vary widely. She refers to BDSM as a “counterculture” with “complex rules,” without acknowledging the fact that a lot of people who engage in BDSM aren't engaged with it as a counterculture and don't have much interest in its complex rules.

Most importantly, she oversimplifies the issue of consent in BDSM play and relationships, asserting that consent in BDSM “has to be founded on a constant proclamation of enthusiastic consent, which mainstream sexuality has systematically dismantled.” But she doesn't really talk about what constant, enthusiastic consent actually *looks* like in a scene based around nonconsent and rape (rape play, of course, is the focus of the essay), returning instead to her assertion that because of all those rules and negotiation, BDSM is “the ultimate in trust and collaborative ‘performance,’ its rules and artifice the very antithesis of rape.”

As I've been exploring on here recently, though, the reality is much more complex. Rape play is not the antithesis of rape simply by virtue of consent being involved, both because (a) it still fetishizes and draws from the idea of rape and non-consent and (b) within any given rape play scene, the line between consent and non-consent can become microscopically thin. For those of us who are prone to sinking into submissive headspace or other states of consciousness during play (which make it very difficult to discern what we do and do not want), the idea of proclaiming enthusiastic consent during the entire duration of the scene just doesn't resonate. It's not always as simple as safewords, and it requires *communication* and awareness of the ways in which things can shift during a scene, not hard-and-fast rules.

Shifting gears a little: having absolved BDSM of the blame for creating rape culture, Fowles spends the latter half of the essay attributing it instead to the supposed increase in rape imagery in mainstream porn. (An assertion that might be true, but that is not backed up in the essay by any facts or studies.) She writes:

*No longer reserved for an informed, invested viewer who carefully sought it out after a trip to a fetish bookstore, BDSM is represented in every porn portal on the Internet . . . . This kind of constant, unrestrained availability trains viewers who don't have a BDSM cultural awareness, investment or education to believe that what women want is to be coerced and, in some cases, forced into acts they don't consent to. . . . the imagery's constant, instant availability makes rape and sex one and the same for the mainstream viewer.*

I do see her point that there's a difference between treating rape play as a fetish and presenting it as normal sex; sure, people who get their only ideas of what sex is and should be like from pornography are probably going to have some unrealistic ideas of what to expect from their partners. But it disturbs me, this distinction between the well-educated kinkster who carefully selects his Real BDSM pornography from Real BDSM pros and Joe Average who downloads some mainstream porn of a woman getting told to “take it” while getting violently fucked. Is it not okay to be turned on by this sort of sex if you don't identify as a dom or sub, if you're not a member of your local BDSM organization? Is it only okay to like rape play if you're involved enough in the kink world to actually call it “rape play”? Alternatively, if you do identify as kinky, is it not okay to get turned on by mainstream porn, or are we only supposed to masturbate to Kink.com?

I want to reiterate that I do appreciate that in her article, Fowles is trying to defend BDSM in a very small space to an audience that ostensibly has no background in it and little knowledge of it. I applaud

her for that. She's trying to explain BDSM in an understandable way, and trying not to frighten them off. But I have to wonder — does this sort of visibility help us, or does it do us a disservice to ignore the “scary” parts of BDSM, those aspects that are a lot harder to justify under mainstream liberal feminist ideology?

## Rape Play (Part Two)

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/12/30/rape-play-part-two/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/12/30/rape-play-part-two/)>

**Date:** December 30, 2008

**Category:** Labels and Roles

**Topics:** fantasy rape, rape play

Some fantastic comments on one of my last posts have led me to think about the topic of fantasy rape for a lot longer than I'd originally intended, and specifically about the issue of terminology.

To summarize my last post: the term “rape play” has always troubled me, mostly because of what I perceive as an internal contradiction in the phrase. That is, rape is inherently nonconsensual, and BDSM play is inherently consensual; even if rape play might *look* like rape to an uninformed observer, the very fact that the scene is consensual means that it actually has nothing to do with real rape, and using the word “rape” to describe it is just inaccurate. The problem that I saw in the term “play rape” was that when we wrap something in qualifiers instead of calling it something different entirely, we make the error of inherently associating what we do with that other activity—and we don't want to associate consensual sex with rape, because that gives fuel to the idea that women who are raped actually want it, etc.

But Dev made a great point in her comment on my last post: “The truth is that we do things, consensually and in love or play, that are negative in other contexts [and] that humans have done to each other abusively. [...] But that is just endemic to the things we do, and it's part of their power. Rape play doesn't just happen to resemble rape – it feeds off of our ideas of rape all the way.”

That is: it *isn't* an error to associate rape play with real rape, even if we would never want to *actually* rape or be raped. They're not the same, which is why we do need a qualifier, but they are certainly related—and calling it something other than what it is is simply an attempt to shield ourselves from the negativity and fear generated by the idea of actual rape. As Ranat said in her comment: “The abstraction [can] go on and on, divorcing me more and more from the ‘bad word.’ For me, with the abstraction comes an unspoken apology that I'm still trying to convince myself I don't need to make.”

I think one of the big problems I've had with this (and with the concept of BDSM “play” in general) comes from the dilemma of how to argue with anti-BDSM folks without resorting to “but it's \*nothing like\* real rape/abuse/etc.” It's an easy comeback—but it's just not true. If it were true, if all we were doing was dress-up and play-pretend games, it wouldn't be all that erotic...

## Overdue Update

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/12/17/overdue-update/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/12/17/overdue-update/)>

**Date:** December 17, 2008

**Category:** anarchism, Kink Community, Workshops

**Topics:** anarchist bdsm, anarkink, fetlife, kinkforall

....and another 3 weeks without a post. Where does the time go?

All of my writing energy is being eaten up by work (as in employment). Perhaps I just need to start staying late at the office once a week to write for myself, because I sure as hell am not motivated to turn on my laptop at home after a 9-hour day of writing and editing.

Anyway, here's a brief update.

1. The Anarchist BDSM group—which we’re now calling “Anarkink”—is going really well. We’re having an informal potluck next week and are planning a flogger-making and -using skillshare on January 22. Most exciting, to me, is that we’re starting to talk about a fundraiser party to be held after the SF Anarchist Bookfair (March 14), to feature a spanking booth, shibari demos, and more. The money will then be used to secure a regular meeting space for us, so that we won’t have to worry about asking people to pay to attend meetings or workshops.
2. I joined FetLife and have totally been sucked in. If you’re on there, feel free to add me as a friend; my profile is here. Also, if you’re of the anarchist or anti-authoritarian persuasion, why not join the FetLife Anarchist BDSM group?
3. I just read about an interesting event being organized in New York called KinkForAll.

*KinkForAll is an ad-hoc gathering born from the desire for people of the kink, queer, sex-positive and related communities to share and learn in an open environment. It is an intense event with discussions, presentations, and interaction from all participants. [...] Attendees must give a talk or a presentation, help with one, or otherwise volunteer/contribute in some way to support the event. The people present at the event will select the demos or presentations they want to see.*

Doesn’t that sound intriguing? If you’re on the East Coast, you should check it out.

Hopefully, next week I’ll be back with a more thoughtful post...

## Rape Play / Forced Submission

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/11/28/rape-play-forced-submission/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/11/28/rape-play-forced-submission/)>

**Date:** November 28, 2008

**Category:** Communication and Consent, D/s, Labels and Roles

**Topics:** consent, forced submission, rape play, seduction

(This is something I wrote months and months ago, and forgot about...)

I’ve never really been a fan of the term “rape play.” To me, it’s a self-contradicting term; “rape” describes a non-consensual sexual encounter, while “play” describes a consensual one. In the past, I was also averse to the term because I didn’t feel that it really described the sort of play that my partner and I have talked about and engaged in. As he’s described them to me, my partner’s fantasies of “rape” have always included the knowledge that the other person actually wants it and is really turned on by it, or rather that he’s *making* the person want it. It’s the “no...no....YES!” fantasy.

In a sense, yes, this is quite similar to a lot of real-life rape scenarios. The rapist’s idea that “aw, c’mon, she really wanted it, even if she said ‘no’” is a cliché at this point, and quite a lot of rape starts out looking like seduction, especially when the person being raped is confused about what she wants and what she **SHOULD** want. But in a “rape play” scene, of course, the person being “raped” knows what she wants beforehand, and knows, on some level, what’s going to happen in the scene. Is it really appropriate to use a word like “rape,” then, to describe something that’s negotiated, consensual, and (hopefully) mutually enjoyable?

I usually prefer the term “forced submission” to describe the sort of rough sex that usually takes place between me and my partner, a submission that he has to win from me. It’s a fight, a struggle, and a defiant attitude throughout; I swear and bite and curse him. Or, alternately, it’s “seduced submission,” a shyness, with him teasing me and slowly forcing himself upon me, my protests growing weaker as he shows me that I’m really enjoying myself.

On the other hand, some of my experiences with this kind of play has really pushed my boundaries of consent, because such scenes can drop me into a headspace in which I really don’t know what I want. In those times, the play can sometimes seem very real. I start to struggle in earnest, as if I really didn’t want to be touched. It’s when I reach that space, that just-a-little-too-real space, that I get the most

turned on. But it's also when I come dangerously close to breaking down, to getting hurt. I have reached the point, a few times, when I've felt for a second like I was actually being forced against my will, like I actually had no choice. Those are the times when I think that "rape play" might actually be a very accurate term. When I think about it, it's probably more "edge" than anything else we do.

...yet I'm still not comfortable with the term. There's a nagging feeling I have that using it somehow lessens the meaning of the word; that it belittles the experiences of those who *have* been raped to say that what I do for pleasure is somehow similar enough to someone else's traumatic experience to use the same word for it. It creeps me out, a little.

## Humiliation

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/11/18/humiliation/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/11/18/humiliation/)>

**Date:** November 18, 2008

**Category:** Humiliation

**Topics:** forced masturbation, forced orgasm, Humiliation

When I first began to recognize my submissive sexual identity, it was still wrapped up in a "safe" set of desires and fantasies. I focused on *seduction*, not active submission. I was interested in being taken advantage of, I acknowledged, but it wasn't like I was into whips and chains, or wanted to be beaten down, or wanted to be degraded and humiliated. I wasn't a *pervert*. I just happened to prefer it when my partner was a little more dominant and forward; it was relaxing, I reasoned, to give up control once in a while. I liked getting tied up, but I wasn't into spanking or any of that. Or, maybe spanking is kind of nice after all—but definitely not whips. I mean, it's not like I'm a masochist or anything.

...and on and on down the list, until I finally started to let more and more of the shameful fantasies come to the surface and to explore new things I hadn't even thought of. I recognized my desire to be owned, and to submit completely; I discovered that I could, in fact, process pain in an erotic way, and that I absolutely loved to be flogged, spanked, kicked, and beaten. The one thing I couldn't really think about was humiliation play.

What's interesting, looking back on my earliest sexual fantasies, is how heavily my "seduction" scenarios were infused with humiliation play. My fantasies about being teased and toyed with until I couldn't help but allow my seducer to do whatever he wanted with me, I told myself, got me off because I enjoyed giving up my control. But when I think about it, the "teasing" in those fantasies was downright cruel. They always involved me doing my best to not give in to a person I did not want to sleep with, to whom I did not want to give the satisfaction of making me desire him, of making me come. In the end, I always gave in, I always went from pulling away to desperately trying to draw him closer—as he laughed in my face, taunting me, triumphing. In my fantasies, I did not love the person toying with me. I hated him. I cursed him under my breath even as I begged for him. The fact that the pleasure he was giving me was not done out of love or compassion but as a game, as a show of power and control over me, was incredibly hot. He would make me come not because he wanted to give me pleasure but because he wanted to show that he could do it, that just as he could deny me pleasure when I wanted it, he could also force pleasure upon me when I didn't want it.

It's shocking, really, that I didn't recognize it sooner, and it makes me wonder what it is about that fantasy, about being humiliated for my desire, that makes me so uncomfortable. Undoubtedly it's the fact that it's just as much of a fear of mine as it is a fantasy, something I've had a hard time getting past—the fear that expressing sexual desire in any way will make me a target of ridicule. (Both in the sense that I obviously must be a shameless slut and in the sense that I'm not attractive enough for the object of my desire to reciprocate the feeling.)

Not too long ago, my partner and I began to play with humiliation a little bit. It was incredibly intense, much more than I expected—it sent me reeling out into a headspace in which I felt a range of conflicting emotions and completely out of control. It's been interesting to see what turns me on, what

does nothing for me, and what disgusts me or makes me feel too uncomfortable to go on. Spitting on my face and forcing me to drool are both incredibly hot; spitting in my mouth just makes me want to vomit. Calling me a filthy slut or a worthless piece of trash is hot; calling me a whore makes me want to immediately stop the scene. Being told to masturbate while he simply watches makes me feel self-conscious; him taking my hand and forcing me to masturbate feels amazing.

There seems to be a fine line between domination and humiliation, and what one person finds humiliating another might consider a sign of affection or submission. Being collared, kneeling, boot worship/licking, and obeying commands are all things I find erotic, but not at all humiliating. Another person might think nothing of the fact that being gagged makes him drool a little bit, but for me it has a profound effect. And, of course, what makes me feel humiliated might not synch up with what my partner thinks is humiliating, which affects our play as well.

It's nice to have a new kink to ponder.

## Rejection

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/11/09/rejection/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/11/09/rejection/)>

**Date:** November 9, 2008

**Category:** Mistakes, Relationships

Has it really been a month since I've last written on this blog?

I've been finding it really difficult to write, lately, as I suppose my absence here would suggest. I've been tired and stressed and exhausted all the time, worn very thin by what seems to be just "normal life" for everyone else around me. I find myself daydreaming of *escape* more often than is probably healthy for me. I've been cutting myself off from people and activities I used to enjoy, simply because it seems like too much effort to maintain the relationships or to spend my non-work hours doing anything but curling up under a blanket. Old sources of guilt and depression have been resurfacing out of nowhere. In short: the last few months have been sort of crappy.

We had a second meeting of "Anarkink," as we're now calling the Anarchist BDSM group, and it was great, and we had some interesting conversations, and I left feeling confused and sad, because like everything else, it now seems too difficult, too stressful, to really throw myself in and to get the most out of this group.

...but enough of that. Let me try to assemble something like a decent blog post, here.

One piece of the repressed-sexuality baggage I'm still struggling to discard has to do with rejection. In my head, if I try to initiate sex and am turned away, this is because my sexuality is bad and repulsive and I'm a horrible slut — not because my partner is tired, sick, or stressed out, which would be a more reasonable way of looking at the situation (i.e. based in fact). When I let my desire show, and he doesn't reciprocate — when he gently tells me that he's just not feeling it right now — my stomach turns inside-out, and it just starts a vicious circle of us making each other feel worse and worse.

The other night, that started to happen. We ended up in bed together, both of us feeling terrible. I tried to explain how it made me feel ashamed to want sex when he didn't, and how I just didn't know what to do in these situations, when my body was burning and he just wanted to go to sleep. Earlier that week I actually hadn't been able to get to sleep because of it, and had ended up going to sleep in the other room instead. This time, I let him know that I was turned on enough that I wasn't going to be able to fall asleep without coming first.

And then we had a long conversation about what he could and couldn't do in such situations, to what extent he was willing to help me get what I needed. I could masturbate, he said, and I could do it with him in the room. But I felt too uncomfortable to do that if he was simply passively sitting next to me, or worse, turned away from me. It felt deeply shameful, no matter what he said to dissuade me from those feelings. I realized that earlier, when he'd admitted that he wasn't feeling interested in sex that evening, I probably would have been fine if he'd done it in a more direct way, telling me that we



would not be having sex — but also telling me that I would be able to come if I wanted to, if I waited and didn't put any more pressure on him.

I also realized that his discomfort at those situations in which I start to get pushy, when it becomes really obvious that I want to play or fuck, wasn't due to my desire but to my *expectations*. Expectations put pressure on him = immediate turn off.

So here's sort of the ideal situation I've worked out in my head:

Me: [Passionately kisses him/kneels/puts my hands behind my back/etc.]

Him: Just so you know, we're not going to be playing or having sex tonight.

Me: Oh. Okay.

Him: If you wait until we go to bed, I'll allow you to come then. [OR: I want you to go into your room and have two orgasms. Come straight back here when you're done.]

By the time we were done discussing all of this, naturally, we were both really turned on and ended up having an awesome time...

## Sexual Healing

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/10/08/sexual-healing/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/10/08/sexual-healing/)>

**Date:** October 8, 2008

**Category:** BDSM & Psych, Relationships

**Topics:** anxiety attacks, orgasm problems, sex and neurosis

I haven't been writing on here very much, lately. That's in part because of a lack of time, a little more because of a lack of inspiration, and over the past week or so, predominantly because I've been finding it difficult to do *anything* beyond sitting numbly on the floor or having fits of great heaving sobs. I have always had bad days, here and there, but this just won't let go, and I have no idea why. It lets up for a day, then comes back unexpectedly just before I go to bed. I sleep well, then wake up the next morning unable to go to work because I just cannot stop crying. Last night was terrible, but now I feel on an upswing, hence: writing.

Why writing *here*? I suppose because spilling this out anonymously online is easier for me to do than taking a friend aside and wanting to talk to them. (I worry too much that they won't want to hear it, that they'll be uncomfortable and focus too much on "what do you want me to do?")

But there also is a component that does relate to this blog, and I'll focus on that for now. Some times, I wonder if Marvin Gaye was right, and sex really is the best therapy for depression. Sure, "Sexual Healing" is totally cheesy, it's a song that's always treated as a joke, but some of the lyrics are actually a pretty accurate description of the kind of overwhelm I experience. For example, try to read these lines straight, without hearing the song in your head:

*I got sick this morning*

*A sea was storming inside of me*

*I think I'm capsizing*

*The waves are rising and rising*

...yes, that pretty much sums it up. We laugh at that song because he's singing about wanting to get laid so he'll feel better, but is that really so funny? He sings "The love you give to me will free me," and taken without all the pop culture context that surrounds that song (and the silly lines that follow it like "I can't wait for you to operate"), that line actually makes a lot of sense to me. It's a song about his lady taking care of him when he's depressed and feeling unstable.

Last night, out of the blue, I started freaking out. My skin began to feel tight and itchy, and I went to bed feeling constrained by the bedsheets. When my partner came in and joined me, I couldn't bear to feel him close to me, especially when he moved his face close to mine. I jerked back, and it rushed over me, this feeling of anxiety and tension, my body rigid, every touch nearly unbearable. My thoughts started racing, and my words came out thick and awkward as I tried to explain what I was feeling. My

head was pounding. I decided to take a shower. Hot water usually does a lot to calm me down. He sat in the bathroom with me while I bathed, and helped me back to bed. I lay naked on top of the sheets, and for the first time that night realized that I was aching with desire and arousal. I recognized this not as some sort of eroticization of what was happening to me but as a purely physical need to have an orgasm after several days of completely ignoring my sexual drive.

But of course, I couldn't say this. I could barely speak at all. He touched my body softly, and it made me ache even more. I wanted him to gently play with me, to pinch, to attach clothespins all over my body. I wanted to lay back and just *feel*. I wanted to feel pain and pleasure, but not to feel enclosed, or forced, or controlled; to feel his hand pinching, but not slapping; to look in his eyes, but from a few feet away. I wanted—no, *needed*—to come, but I didn't want to fuck, didn't want to play, didn't even want to feel his body over mine. I didn't want to masturbate, even if he were to order me to do so, as it would feel too much like I was just getting it out of the way, trying to release the tension, and I knew from past experience that such orgasms would leave me feeling even worse than before. I felt frozen, and knew I couldn't possibly do anything beyond just laying on my back. Not now. Maybe not at all tonight. I felt ashamed, wanting him to focus completely on me without satisfying his own desire, without me returning the attention. And so I couldn't ask for it. I managed to ask him to pinch me. Later, I asked for his hand on my throat, which was comforting and calming, but he began to take it to mean I wanted him to dominate me, and the second he climbed on top of me I began to lose it again.

I can't even understand how well he deals with times like these. How hard it is to see the person you love suffering, and to have everything you try to do to help her make things worse! How hard it is to be pushed away again and again, and to not be hurt and angry about it, to instead just remain calm and come back and simply *be there*, to keep trying, to push aside hurt feelings, to not get frustrated and upset when there seems to be nothing you can do.

So he kept trying, and eventually I was able to communicate enough that he was able to touch me and play with me in the way I wanted, and he made me feel all kinds of wonderful, and then I had a series of joyless, intense orgasms that left me feeling knotted up and half-crazed, like having an itch I was unable to scratch. (This is not an uncommon experience for me. This has actually been the norm for me for large portions of my adult life—orgasms that are little more than body spasms, that leave me feeling even more sexually frustrated than before I started.) I eventually fell asleep, after a lot of time lying awake wondering how much my neuroses are connected to my frequent inability to have satisfying orgasms, how much of my anxiety attacks is simply an expression of unacknowledged sexual desire and pent-up energy. Is it possible that at least a portion of the reason behind my anxiety and depression-ridden days is just not having enough or satisfying orgasms? Or is it the other way around—is my inability to have good orgasms the result of long-held stress and anxiety? Or do the two feed off each other in a vicious circle?

I suppose this means I should go read some Reich.

## A Good Start

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/10/01/a-good-start/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/10/01/a-good-start/)>

**Date:** October 1, 2008

**Category:** anarchism, Kink Community

**Topics:** anarchist bdsm, anarchist bdsm group, kinky anarchist group

The first meeting of the Anarchist BDSM group went well. Really well.

In fact, it was pretty much exactly what I was hoping it would be. About thirteen people showed up, only four of whom I knew, and half dozen more contacted me wanting to come to the next meeting. I started the meeting, and semi-facilitated it, but for the most part everyone else just kept things moving along on their own. The experience levels within the group varied widely: there were people who seemed to have virtually no experience with BDSM, and then there were two pro-doms. Most everyone expressed

a general aversion to the larger BDSM scene, though we didn't talk about it much beyond an agreement that we wanted a different sort of space for ourselves.

It looks like we'll probably start out with a mostly discussion-based group, and then incorporate skillshare components when group members are interested/comfortable/able to do so. What was most exciting to me was the idea that while we'd be meeting once a month as a group, we could easily meet in smaller groups at other times if there were particular things that came up in discussion that only a few people were interested in — like reading a piece of theory together, or having an evening of rope bondage practice at someone's house.

We also agreed not to get into politics too much in the group, because even though we all identify as anarchists, that label has very different meanings for different people — and we really don't want the group to degenerate into a game of "you're not a *real* anarchist because..." I would personally like to have a conversation about how to deal with anti-BDSM sentiment coming from other anarchists (though I know not everyone in the group is into that idea), and in constructing defenses of BDSM from an anarchist perspective, but I definitely am wary about getting into that sort of thing in a big group. I'd love to talk more theory with people, but am now thinking that I might just find a few other geeks in the group and meet separately for that sort of stuff.

For now, it looks like we're going to just decide the topic of the next meeting at the end of every meeting. October's theme is a little vague still, and open for interpretation: negotiation. (This could be as simple as "how to negotiate a scene with someone you've never met before," or be more along the lines of "how does the sort of negotiating we do in BDSM relate to our communications and relationships with other people in a non-kink way?" Or something else entirely.)

The meeting in October is on Thursday, the 30th, from 7-9 pm. Location TBA (it will be either in Oakland or Berkeley, at a wheelchair-accessible venue this time).

We're still looking for a name for the group, by the way. Let me know if you have any ideas...

## Anarchist BDSM Group

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/09/04/anarchist-bdsm-group/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/09/04/anarchist-bdsm-group/)>

**Date:** September 4, 2008

**Category:** anarchism, Coming Out, Kink Community, The Scene

**Topics:** anarchist bdsm, bdsm & anarchism, kinky anarchists

So this is really going to happen. Months of talk with some other kinky anarchist friends has finally resulted in finding a space and setting a date for the first meeting of an Anarchist BDSM group. I've even made a flyer, which I intend to distribute in all manner of anarchist and radical spaces. (See below.)

I'm excited, but also nervous. This is for a few reasons.

1. I consider myself a total noob when it comes to the BDSM scene, and I'm afraid that people who *are* in that scene might take offense to my essentially saying that after my extremely limited interactions with the mainstream kink/leather scene, I feel the need to create something separate rather than use what they've spent decades building up. There's certainly a part of me that feels I'm throwing it all out prematurely, judging it all as flawed and "not for me" before I've even given it a chance.
2. On a similar note, being relatively new to BDSM also means that I don't really have any techniques to share, which I think is a large component of what I'd want in a group like this. Obviously, the idea here is for multiple inexperienced people to teach themselves and learn from each others' successes and failures — but I'm afraid that as the person kicking this off, the fact that I'm not able to immediately bring any new ideas or skills to the table will make the group short-lived unless there are other people who *do* have those skills ready to step up.

3. I'm afraid that a group like this will be of interest to only a handful of people, most of whom I already know. I'm afraid that most anarchists who are into BDSM are fine with just playing on their own or using the resources of the existing scene, and that people won't understand why a group like this needs to exist: "What difference does it make if you're an anarchist or not? Your political opinions don't have anything to do with the way you play." My response, of course, is, "Yes, they do." I wouldn't want to sub to someone who held sexist ideas about the relative worth or "natural" tendencies of women; I wouldn't want to sub to someone who thought that we were simply bringing out latent non-sexual power dynamics that already existed between us. I wouldn't want to sub to someone who's a cop. The political opinions of the people I play with affect how I view our d/s dynamic, because they make me wonder how much of that power dynamic is sexual fetish and how much is what they actually believe is an appropriate way for human beings to interact. It affects how deep I can go into subspace while still feeling safe. (Obviously, there's a hell of a lot more to say about this, but this will have to do for now...)
4. My fourth big fear is the fact that working to organize and promote this group is going to require me to be a lot more out about my sexuality — of course, it will mostly be to other kinky folk, which doesn't seem so bad, but I still have some huge blocks around talking publicly about my sex life. *Blogg*ing about it, sure. But speaking about it? To a group of people? [Shudders.]

But hopefully, there really *is* a need for a group like this, and plenty of people will show up eager to participate, with lots of ideas and energy, and nobody will criticize me and I won't feel nervous at all. Yes, that would be ideal.

Please spread the word to any radical kinky folk you know, and feel free to repost the flyer. Also, if anyone can come up with a clever name for the group...let me know. As my partner pointed out, it's really too bad that "Bound Together" is already taken.

## Branding, Three Months Later

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/08/27/branding-three-months-later/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/08/27/branding-three-months-later/)>

**Date:** August 27, 2008

**Category:** Body Mods

**Topics:** branding, keloid, strike brand

A little while ago, I wrote about my first experience with branding. It was a really beautiful and wholly positive event, and I almost immediately started planning for my next brand.

After a few weeks, I was starting to get a little worried about how it was scarring—it seemed to be way, way bigger than I was expecting it would turn out, and two parts of the brand were merging together into a blob. Still, I thought, the scar would quickly start to turn lighter and lighter, and eventually it would be barely noticeable. That was part of the appeal of branding for me: unlike tattooing, branding results in a much more subtle design on the skin, a slightly lighter shade of one's normal skin color. So I thought.

Now, over three months later, the scar has keloided, and is bright pink. The two distinct parts of the design have become connected with scar tissue, making it almost completely indistinguishable. The location (the middle of my chest) and the bright color attract a lot of comments, now that it's hot and I'm wearing tank tops a lot, and I'm getting tired of explaining to people what the brand was \*supposed\* to look like.

But the worst part is that the keloid has become itchy and painful, and the skin around the brand has become extremely sensitive as well. I can't bear to have the brand touched at all, and I have a hard time finding a comfortable position to sleep in, because lying on my side pushes the skin together and rubs the brand. I'm starting to worry about how long it will take for the pain to go away — a year?



# **Anarkink**

**presents:**

## **Post-Bookfair Sexy Good-Time Fun Party!**

**For kinky (and curious) anarchists and their friends**

**Saturday, March 14th**

**9pm–2am**

**2192 Folsom (at 18th)**

**\$5–15 sliding scale donation**

**(no one turned away for lack of funds)**

- \* rope bondage performance by Mike West**
  - \* spanking and flogging booth**
  - \* beats by dj tomk@t and Miss Gawker (SPAZ)**
- (you must be 18+ to attend)**

**Anarkink is a group of anarchists and anti-authoritarians who practice or are interested in BDSM. Proceeds from this party will help us secure a regular meeting space and ensure that our workshops can be free for everyone.**

**More info at [anarchistbdsm.wordpress.com](http://anarchistbdsm.wordpress.com)**

More? I have no idea what to expect. I'm thinking about going to a dermatologist. I've tried to get in touch with Fakir, who did the brand, but he hasn't responded yet.

I'll always treasure the experience of getting my brand, but I really wish I'd gotten more information about the healing process before I went through with it. I don't think I'd have done it if I'd realized how much the shape was going to change and how painful the resulting scar would be.

UPDATE: I did end up going to a dermatologist, who told me that the sternum and upper back are areas that are particularly prone to keloiding, and that it was likely that skin trauma of other kinds in those areas (cutting, hooks, etc.) would have the same result for me. He gave me a cortisone injection and told me to start using silicone scar pads (Curad Scar Therapy) every day. I did so, and after four or five weeks I noticed that the keloid had become flatter and wasn't as painful. I stopped using the pads when I ran out of them (they're expensive!), and while I don't have the shooting pains anymore, the scar is still very sensitive and occasionally itchy.

In three months, I will have had the brand for two years. I've gotten used to it, to a certain extent, but I expect that I will someday again explore options for how to get rid of the scar. I ultimately regret getting the brand, and would advise others to (a) test your skin as much as possible first to know how it will likely react and (b) if your skin is sensitive and prone to scarring, avoid the chest and back unless you *want* keloiding. (I understand that for a lot of people, keloids aren't painful and are aesthetically pleasing.)

## Feet

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/08/16/feet/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/08/16/feet/)>

**Date:** August 16, 2008

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**Topics:** boot fetish, boot licking, boot worship, foot fetish

I've recently come to the realization that I have something of a foot fetish. It feels very strange to me, because it's the sort of thing most often joked about when people start talking about fetishes or kinks—it seems absurd and laughable, so far divorced from “real” sex that it's completely incomprehensible to most. But there it is.

It first presented itself as a boot fetish, but this wasn't too jarring to me, as I've always found boots aesthetically appealing (both on my partners and on myself), and so recognizing that I found boots *sexy* as well wasn't difficult to do.

Then came my first fantasy about boot licking. More than perhaps any other kink or fetish I have, this one was probably the most difficult to bring up to my partner. (He was intrigued by it, and now boot worship is a regular feature of our play.) Then came the idea of being stepped on, which quickly progressed to being kicked. Currently, I'm stuck on the idea of my partner strapping a dildo to his boot and fucking me with it.

But in most of these fantasies, my attention was always mostly on the boot, not the foot. Thus, I never considered myself a “foot fetishist.” Somehow, even when play began to include my partner's bare feet in my mouth, kicking me, stepping on me, or masturbating me, I never once had the thought that I was it was the foot itself, not just the foot inside the boot, that I found so hot.

Then, a few nights ago, I was taking a shower with my partner. We had been taking turns washing each other (in a romantic “doing nice things for each other” way, not in a sexy way), and I knelt down to wash his legs. Then I picked up his foot and began soaping it, and I was instantly aroused. I looked up at him; he had noticed. I silently washed his feet, slowly caressing them, somewhat embarrassed but undeniably turned on.

The rest of that evening was very, very nice. (And I'll leave it at that.) But I'm still somewhat unnerved and puzzled by this newly discovered fetish. My gut instinct tells me that it's connected to my kink for submission in general—that the fetish is related to the feet being the lowest part of the body (both physically and metaphorically), and being at his feet, cleaning his feet, or being fucked by his feet are all ways to draw out that submissiveness by pushing me down into that “lower” space.

(That's one idea, anyway.)

## Building an Alternative

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/08/10/building-an-alternative/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/08/10/building-an-alternative/)>

**Date:** August 10, 2008

**Category:** Kink Community, The Scene, Workshops

**Topics:** diy bdsm, play piercing, screwup, trans bdsm

On Friday night, I went to screwup, a trans/genderqueer BDSM group in San Francisco. Open to all genders, screwup is non-hierarchical and staunchly DIY in its philosophy; there's no elected board, and workshops are put on by anyone who wants to do one. It's all done on a volunteer basis, so workshops are free, with donations requested to cover the cost of renting a space.

Needless to say, I found all of this incredibly exciting and refreshing. I talked to one of the organizers at length about why screwup was formed—both as a response to BDSM spaces that didn't really understand the specific needs of the trans community and as an alternative to a scene focused on traditional top-down power structures, for-profit workshops organized by “professionals” and “experts,” and expensive toys and fetish wear.

The topic of the evening was play piercing, something I felt was sort of beyond my reach without thorough training and instruction. I came away from the workshop realizing that it really, really wasn't, and that there were probably a lot of things I'm currently afraid of trying that I could learn to do myself or with friends, with the appropriate safety measures and risk-awareness. At the end of the evening, we were encouraged to try piercing ourselves or others, and being too nervous to stick someone else, I did a simple piercing in my forearm. I was shocked: it was absurdly easy, and didn't hurt a bit. (Obviously, having four or five of them probably would have started to hurt a lot more, not to mention having them inserted somewhere a bit more sensitive...)

But the point of this post isn't really to talk about play piercing; the point is that there *are* people out there creating alternatives to the mainstream BDSM scene, that there *are* people who think that the best way to teach and learn techniques is through peer skill sharing and personal practice, not expensive classes and extensive training. It's all very inspiring, and makes me more hopeful than ever that my friends and I can start something similar within the anarchist scene.

## Non-monogamy

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/08/08/non-monogamy/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/08/08/non-monogamy/)>

**Date:** August 8, 2008

**Category:** Non-monogamy, Relationships

I've been busy, lately, and my free time has largely been taken up by thoughts of and plans for The Future, which generally leads me to curl up in a ball rather than write.

On top of this (or perhaps as an outgrowth of it), my partner and I have started talking about non-monogamy, the first real discussions we've had about it since we started dating nearly three years ago. This has recently become an all-consuming force in my head, because I've never before had such an opportunity.

Back when we first started dating, I still had an interest in non-monogamy. I had brought it up with my previous partner, and he hadn't been okay with it at all. Looking back, I realize that I wanted it for the wrong reason: I really wanted out of that relationship, but couldn't bring myself to actually do it; I wanted the excitement of dating again, but with him as a safety net. It was fucked up, and once I'd acknowledged that, I became reluctant to even think about it as a possibility for me.

As for my current partner, his experience with non-monogamy has been to simply jump into it at the start of a relationship, with no room to actually acknowledge jealousy as being okay and normal. Naturally, this led to a lot of hurt feelings and to (I thought) his washing his hands of the whole thing.

Because of this, it took me completely by surprise when my partner asked me if I might be interested in opening up our relationship. But the more we both talked about it, the more I realized how much his new interest in non-monogamy was tied to the fact that he now felt completely secure and safe in our relationship, that he wasn't worried that a third party would break that bond—as he always was in previous non-monogamous relationships. (I imagine the fact that we're now living together helps with that.)

When he first broached the topic, I was elated. One of the things that's made both of us so unhappy over the past few months has been the now-very-apparent fact that I'm much more interested in kink as a part of my life than he is. I now understand that this fact doesn't mean he's less interested in *me* or that he's less of a dom and sadist than I thought he was, or that he only sort of likes the things we already do. However, we have both recognized that I am more interested in playing more often, longer, and possibly harder than he is, at least at the moment. I end up frustrated at not being able to explore this part of myself as much as I'd like to; he ends up frustrated because I start getting pushy. Acknowledging this has left both of us at kind of a loss for how to deal with it. So the idea of non-monogamy seemed very, very appealing: I could have a play partner on the side for when he wasn't interested in a long scene! I could go play at a dungeon, where I could finally have a flogging session without listening for a roommate coming home! I could play with someone who's interested in elaborate rope bondage and suspension, or other fancy and complicated stuff!

I may ultimately decide I don't want to be a part of the BDSM scene, that I'm not interested in public play, or that having multiple play partners just feels weird to me—but I won't know until I try, and I think I'll feel like I've missed out if I don't.

He tells me that he's fine with the idea of me playing with and submitting to other people, as long as those people understand and acknowledge that they are not my masters or owners, that ultimately I still belong to him. He says that he'd like to set up some things that I do with him alone, just to keep that clear, and suggests "penetrative sex" as this boundary. He is worried because this constitutes a double standard (he can fuck people, but I can't), but I tell him it's one I can live with, since that's not really what I'm after, anyway. I also tell him that I would like to have some sort of mark or collar to wear when I'm playing with other people, just to make the point really clear to other play partners, and to give me the feeling that he's still my dom even when he's not the one wielding the whip. Obviously, that makes him happy. He adds that that he's okay with lifting the no-penetration restriction if one of us is out of town for a significant period of time, which seems reasonable to me. So far, so good.

Of course, if I'm free to play with other people, he wants to be able to as well. I'm fine with that, I think. But as we talk, I realize I am really, really bothered by the idea of him dominating others. It makes me feel insecure about how I'd measure up as a sub, and worry, what if there wasn't anything I could offer him that these other women couldn't as well – and worse, what if they could offer something better? I immediately conjure up an image of him dominating \_\_\_\_, an out submissive woman he's recently acknowledged a strong attraction to (which is probably mutual). I feel sick. I ask if we can't both have double standards: I can play, but not fuck; he can fuck, but not play. He says that he can't imagine having sex with someone without dominating them as well, because it's such an integral part of his sexuality, and I recognize that the same would be true for me as well. We are stuck, and leave the conversation at that.



Later, he's spanking me and it feels wonderful. I suddenly have a fear of my roommate overhearing, and freeze up. Then I have this thought: "\_\_\_\* wouldn't freeze up if my partner were spanking her right now instead of me. She doesn't have all these inhibitions that interrupt sex and make everything uncomfortable. He would enjoy playing with her far more than he would with me."

Which is, of course, when I completely lose my shit and start sobbing hysterically.

I'm not really sure where to go from here.

## Leave the Analysis to Us, Thank You

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/07/21/leave-the-analysis-to-us-thank-you/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/07/21/leave-the-analysis-to-us-thank-you/)>

**Date:** July 21, 2008

**Category:** anarchism, D/s

**Topics:** anarchism & bdsm, anarchist bdsm, bdsm & anarchism

I happened upon this thread on an anarchist message board, [flag.blackened.net](http://flag.blackened.net).

It always makes me a little irritated when I see BDSM misrepresented in the mainstream media. It makes me sad to see feminists critiquing other women for their kinky sexual orientations/practices. But it breaks my fucking heart when I see anarchists doing it. Why? I suppose because "anarchist" is probably the closest I come to really embracing a label to define myself, and when I see people using that label as a justification to trash my sexuality, it hits pretty hard.

Granted: the thread starts out with a single uninformed dumbass making some inane comments that are very quickly shut down. But then we have this:

*To be sure, the issue of BDSM is not without its problems for anarchism. For one, there is a definite strain of anti-feminist thinking in many parts of the subculture.... Consider, for example, the whole philosophy of Gor or the notion of Taken in Hand relationships. Consensual or not they certainly reflect the mindset and ideals of patriarchy rather well. [...] In addition, I'm not so sure I like the notion of dominance and submission, even if voluntary, being cast as normal and healthy ways of life. It lends them a kind of legitimacy that IMO runs counter to the spirit of anarchism. Of course I don't think trying to outlaw BDSM as the poster of the thread suggests is necessarily the answer, or that it would be particularly practical.*

Someone else responded:

*....I think if they lose the taboo then they are no longer as exciting or enjoyable. Think of it this way. Do you think that an anarchist society that respects ones ability to be a drug user would result in everyone becoming drug addicts? Nah, we'd have in place mechanisms to deter it. People, friends, family, comrades, they would dissuade you from overly negative behaviors on the fact that come revolution there'd really be nothing else to do. No work means lots of play, and lots of involvement in the social environment. If you had a friend that was a drug addict I'm sure you'd try to help them out and get them off of their addiction, likewise if you had a friend who was in to sexual domination you might introduce them to more egalitarian forms of sexual partnerships.*

The same person also writes:

*From my perspective the greatest purveyors of sexual domination such as BSDM or prostitution are from the monetarily minded economic persuasion. That is, ancaps, mutualists, or others in this vein. There's a reason for this, of course. That money creates "voluntarily" (coercive) relationships that otherwise wouldn't exist. A beautiful woman isn't going to slap a fat ugly guys celluite ass unless society gives her recompense for it. Destroy society, destroy monetarism, and I bet that situation would be very fucking rare.*

And finally, a bunch of posts that expressed this sentiment:

*.... Personally, I don't have much of an opinion on the matter, and approach it as an intellectual curiosity... It might be really fun for all I know.*

I thought about signing up on the message board in question in order to respond to some of this bullshit, but decided against it for now. Here are some of the things I'd address, were I to bite the bullet and get involved in the argument:

1. Gor and Taken in Hand relationships are not uncontroversial in the kink world. Yes: these communities are decidedly patriarchal, and lots of people are critical of their gender essentialism. If you spent five minutes to see whether or not there were kinky people critical of and outspoken against sexism and patriarchy, you'd find a wealth of information on the subject. There is nothing that says a BDSM relationship, even a 24/7 relationship, has to be based on the notion that one gender is naturally superior to another. Yes, this notion does exist within the BDSM world, but please just recognize that this doesn't mean *all* people playing with BDSM in their sex lives think this way, or are not similarly disturbed by such tendencies.
2. Giving legitimacy to BDSM as a sexual practice is not the same as giving legitimacy to the idea of domination/submission as a model for human relationships. Period. Kinky people *play* with power and hierarchy. It's like saying none of us should play Monopoly, because it imitates and thus legitimizes a capitalist economic system.
3. The idea that in a perfect anarchist society, people would be better able to dissuade kinky people from engaging in such "negative" behaviors begs the question of BDSM being inherently "negative." It isn't.
4. BDSM is not "attractive" to kinky people simply because it is taboo. Quite a lot of kinky people are drawn to it as strongly as they are drawn to the same or another sex; that is, it isn't just a choice but a sexual identity. For many of us, it is something that we cannot fully experience sexual pleasure without.
5. Playing with domination in a sexual relationship is **not** the same thing as an inegalitarian or hierarchical relationship. It is not inherently harmful or "addictive."
6. BDSM is *not* only performed as a paid service, nor is it necessarily linked to pornography or any other kind of sex work. The vast majority of people who practice BDSM are not sex workers.
7. Finally: it's not okay to treat another person's sexuality or subculture as merely an "intellectual curiosity," something to entertain you. If you're curious about it, educate yourself, don't simply start making ignorant comments on a message board.

Over at SM-Feminist, Trinity mentioned a thread on a the feminist Livejournal community, and excerpted the following quote:

*Desire and arousal are complicated and very, very unconscious. It can all be deconstructed until the cows come home, but I think the people who need to deconstruct it are those who engage in it.*

Yes. That. What always makes me feel the most uncomfortable about reading threads like this, or overhearing similar discussions, is this sensation of being talked about behind my back. It's always just a lot of theorizing and postulating about "those people" and what they do, and whether or not any of it is cause for concern.

So how about this, folks: if you're not a part of a particular community/group, and if you don't at least have a good understanding of that group and the debates that already take place inside of it, then *shut the fuck up* and see what they have to say first. Instead of making broad, uninformed statements about that group, their relationships with each other, what they do and don't do, what they like and don't like, why don't you *ask them about it*?

# The Pressure of Dominance

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/07/09/the-pressure-of-dominance/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/07/09/the-pressure-of-dominance/)>

**Date:** July 9, 2008

**Category:** Mistakes, Relationships

**Topics:** Citadel, negotiating relationships, pressure of dominance, topping from below

Sometimes it's easy for me to forget how stressful it can be to wield power over and take responsibility for another person.

Up until this last week or two, things had felt very different between me and my partner. We've been having sex much less frequently, and really playing even less. In part, this is due to conflicting and busy schedules, but can largely be chalked up to stress. There have been an increasing number of nights in which I expect we're going to at least have sex, and he just wants to cuddle. He feels bad; I feel bad; we go to sleep feeling awkward and distant.

As is the case with most of these sort of problems, the only way to deal with it was to spend an entire evening just talking about it, crying, and talking some more.

While talking about it, I mentioned that all this seems to have started with a disappointing flogging workshop we attended at the Citadel a few months ago. In this workshop, attendees were expected to try out techniques on each other: to simply split up into pairs and practice, without hands-on teaching or any real supervision. He wasn't able to do it. He felt so nervous and intimidated by the whole thing that we ended up leaving, which of course made him feel even worse — especially because I'd been feeling fine about the whole thing and had been feeling more and more interested in that sort of public play. It was an incredibly demoralizing experience for him, he told me, one that left him very shaken and insecure about his dominance.

Since then, it's become an underlying issue affecting our play. It's hard to be dominant when you can't shake the feeling that your submissive wants more than what you can or want to deliver; it's hard to top someone when you're feeling pressured to do so more often and harder than you yourself are comfortable with. And recently, that's been our dynamic: I ask for a scene, I talk to him about classes and workshops we might attend, new things we might try, and all of it just makes him shrink away. When I push, when I try to direct things, when I'm pursuing him, it's difficult for him to not feel pressured — and pressure, of course, is always a great killer of sexual desire, but especially when you're supposed to be the one in control.

Immediately after that conversation, a few weeks ago, I was at a complete loss. I knew the appropriate response from me was to just back the fuck off, to stop bringing it up, to stop pressuring him into playing, to put ideas of further workshops and public activities out of my head completely, to give him the time and space to feel confident in his dominance and to play with me because he wants to, not because he feels like he has to. And ultimately, that's what I agreed to do. For two weeks, I wouldn't say a word about sex or play, and would let him take his time and initiate it when he wanted.

I hated it. Every time I wanted to play and couldn't ask for it, all I could really think is, "Why doesn't he want this? We have time and privacy, why isn't he just tearing off my clothes right this second? Is this losing its appeal? Am *I* losing my appeal?" on top of an underlying "*Goddamn* I want to be beaten and hurt and fucked right now." And then, of course, I started thinking, "How long is this going to go on? Can I really be happy if this ends up being the norm in our relationship, with sex once or twice a week and a long play session *maybe* once a month? Can I be happy if those play sessions involve the same few activities over and over, if he's not interested in ever learning new things or trying new toys, in inventing new games and tortures and ways to make me squirm? Can I be happy if he's never as interested in this stuff as I am, if he never wants to prioritize it in the way that I do?"

And of course, that's a lot of nonsense. I realize that now that a few weeks have passed, and our d/s seems to be back in full force. He was right — all it took was a little time in which I wasn't putting on the pressure, and his dominance came right back out. The less I push to get what I want, the more I actually get what I want. All I needed to do was trust that he wants all of this as much as I do, and I

very quickly was able to see the same desire reflected in his eyes. So many times I get to this point, this not *really* believing that he wants me in this way, and every time I realize it's a silly and unfounded fear. (A fear legitimately rooted in bad past experiences, but nevertheless unfounded, at least with my current partner.)

Relationships are at once so complicated and so simple, whether kinky or vanilla. Everything I've written here, everything I've learned from this experience, all boils down to the same clichéd phrases: time; space; talking; listening; trust. How is it that such simple words describe the most difficult challenges?

## Subtle Differences

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/07/03/subtle-differences/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/07/03/subtle-differences/)>

**Date:** July 3, 2008

**Category:** Labels and Roles

A few years ago, I thought of my kink very, very differently than I do now. Back then, I thought of myself primarily as a “submissive,” and assumed that everything I was into could simply be classified under that one term.

Now, everything I do is in shades of gray. Sometimes, my desires are purely masochistic: I crave pain, regardless of whether or not it's part of a scene, regardless of whether or not I'm bound or on my knees, whether or not I'm *submitting*. Sometimes, those desires come more from a sense of a challenge and self-testing, rather than strictly erotic desire; that is, sometimes I crave pain even when I know it's going to be “bad” pain, while at other times I want only the “good,” high-inducing pain.

Sometimes, I like forced submission: struggling and being subdued, saying “no” and not having it respected, being seduced and persuaded, or just simply being forced down. I like the feeling of struggling against ropes, in particular, and feeling the confining tension of them, the sensation that I couldn't resist even if I wanted to. When I get this way, I often feel like it's a way of releasing tension and giving up responsibility, for a moment—I can be angry, I can curse and rage, and it's met by his calm firmness, keeping me safe.

Sometimes, I drop into an intensely submissive headspace in which I simply want to give my body over to be played with and used; at these times, pain is not pleasurable, but is a means of remembering that my pain does not matter, that it is something I must endure in order to be of service. It's both endurance-testing and a way of practicing patience, self-control, and humility. At times like these, the last thing I want is to feel resistance between me and my partner; I want to *give up* control, not have it *taken from me*.

...and then there are even smaller differences that I can tease out between different styles of submission. Generally, I'm not interested in service submission, or submission done in order to please. Instead, my kink tends to fall on the side of *ownership* — I do this not necessarily because I want to please him and be of use, but because I am *his possession*. (And then: am I a human slave, one who actively performs tasks for my master? Or am I a pet — something to be kept for amusement — or a toy, something to be used?)

It's mind-boggling, when you stop to think about it, how complex this stuff can be...

## The Dominant Submissive

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/06/23/the-dominant-submissive/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/06/23/the-dominant-submissive/)>

**Date:** June 23, 2008

**Category:** D/s, Labels and Roles, The Scene, Workshops

**Topics:** dominant submissive

I subscribe to the RSS feed for the sfbay-bdsm group on Tribe, and someone recently posted about a class they'd attended called "The Dominant Submissive."

The class apparently lauded the good qualities of a particular kind of submissive, one who was independent, stable, confident, opinionated, and strong. This, to the person giving the talk, was a "dominant submissive." She continued by saying that such submissives were attractive to dominants, because they were a good "challenge" for the dom; they needed to be conquered instead of just lying down at his or her feet. She (a self-described dominant submissive) explained that she needed a very strong dom, someone who would accept her challenges and push her down.

All of this makes me a little uncomfortable. First of all, the "dominant submissive" construction implies that the un-adjectived "submissive" label describes a person who has none of these other positive qualities she listed off; the average submissive is thus dependent, unstable, unsure of himself, unthinking, and weak—a doormat. Is it not possible for someone to be just a submissive—to not resist, to enjoy the act of submitting without being forced into it, to be a willing slave—and to also be strong and in charge of her own desires, to speak her mind? Can a person not be both obedient and self-confident? It's as if once deciding to submit, a person is suddenly now and forever a SLAVE, no rights whatsoever, no capacity for independent thought, no ability to speak out for herself.

And that's total bullshit. Yes, of course there do exist submissives who are terribly unsure of themselves and wholly dependent on their masters. But that doesn't mean those are qualities inherent to submission—"submissive" isn't a personality type—or that we need a new category to separate *that* kind of submission from the *good* kind of submission.

Everyone—including bratty bottoms, humiliation-craving slaves, and service subs—has the right to own their own sexuality and their own desire. The fact that I willingly kneel does not mean I'm weaker than the one who wants to be forced there. It means that I derive more pleasure from that particular style of submission.

Which gets into the second thing that really confuses me. To me, the "dominant submissive" is a wholly different kink than what I have come to think of as submission. What this person was describing sounds to me like the sort of kink that comes out of me during a lot of "rape play" or forced submission scenes—the desire to fight, to struggle, to be pushed down roughly, to be controlled, to be bratty and even angry. It sounds completely different from the sort of kink that I usually enjoy, which is a more humble and self-given submission, a gift given, a choice made, a decision to kneel and obey. I certainly don't think it's any better or worse, but to me comes from a completely different place. The assumption that the average sub is just a weak pushover because they don't like to resist or struggle during play seems, to me, like a simple bias in favor of one's own preferred kink. If your biases lie on the other end, you could easily retort that the "dominant submissive" is really just a "resistant submissive," one who doesn't fully own her own submission and who relies on her dom to place her there; she, not the compliant or self-directed submissive, is the one who is weak. (Not that I necessarily think that; just to prove a point.)

Of course, this is all a reaction to an anonymous, secondhand description of a workshop I didn't attend, so I suppose you can take all of it with a grain of salt. But I suspect that the speaker at this workshop is not alone in her assumptions.

## The Love Bracelet

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/06/17/the-love-bracelet/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/06/17/the-love-bracelet/)>

**Date:** June 17, 2008

**Category:** BDSM in the Media

Flipping through the New Yorker last night, I happened to notice a full-page ad for a jewelry line from Cartier. Normally, such things wouldn't catch my eye. But here's the jewelry they were advertising:

Yes, this is a bracelet that is screwed onto your wrist by a lover, who then wears the mini flathead screwdriver around their neck. The caption on the original ad read: “How far would you go for love?”

If you visit [love.cartier.com](http://love.cartier.com), you can check out some even more obviously kinky bracelets, like this:

Doing a little research, it looks like these bracelets have been around since the 70s. They were designed, of course, to show the world you were “locked” into a relationship. They’ve had a renewed surge of popularity among celebs and other rich people who can afford to pay six or seven thousand dollars for one. The question, of course, is whether or not the folks wearing these pieces think of them as simply another piece of jewelry or a symbol of bondage. (My guess is the former. But then, most people wearing wedding or engagement rings don’t think of those as symbols of “bondage,” either...)

It’s a bit of a trip to realize that while all my conversations with my partner about a bracelet or collar to wear have stressed the necessity of keeping it subtle and inconspicuous, it’s considered pure fashion to wear a piece of metal very obviously locked around your wrist — as long as it’s the right brand.

## Ten Things I Hate about Discussions of BDSM on Non-Kinky Feminist Blogs

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/06/14/ten-things-i-hate-about-discussions-of-bdsm-on-non-kinky-feminist-blogs/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/06/14/ten-things-i-hate-about-discussions-of-bdsm-on-non-kinky-feminist-blogs/)>

**Date:** June 14, 2008

**Category:** Feminism

...in no particular order:

1. The assumption that all women in BDSM are submissive, all men are dominant, and everyone is both straight and cisgender.
2. The assumption that kinky people haven’t examined their desires.
3. ...and that non-kinky people have a better idea about where those desires come from and what they mean than kinky people do.
4. The assumption that BDSM is synonymous with (or the gateway to) partner abuse.
5. The suggestion that kinky fantasies are linked to past trauma, especially rape or molestation, and that kinky folks are in need of therapy.
6. The outrageous assertion that non-kinky people have it worse, because in our sex-positive culture (uh, since when?) they’re considered boring prudes.
7. Comments from “recovered masochists” who tell horror stories about some seriously fucked up relationship they had, extrapolating from their experience to speak for all people who have ever played with BDSM.
8. The bizarre notion that BDSM always involves rape play, degradation / humiliation play, anal sex, and/or a man ejaculating on a woman’s face/body.
9. The assumption that women in BDSM were introduced to it by a (male) partner who either forced or coerced them into one of the above activities.
10. The assumption that kinky women who are not ashamed of being kinky think their desires are liberating and somehow inherently more feminist/powerful than those of non-kinky women.

Here's the source of the above rant, though the thread in question is actually pretty civil and mild compared to most others I've read in the past. Other bloggers have said some very insightful things on this topic lately, so I'll just direct you here, here, and here.

I also would like to quote one of Trinity's comments on that original thread, because it really speaks to a few of my biggest pet peeves on the list:

[...] We're not saying we're superior. We're saying that there is this meme in feminist circles that says "Think about what you want," which implies that we have not done so. We're pointing out that anyone who is sexually deviant (or socially deviant in any way) is generally aware of his difference from others (or MADE aware of it, through bullying and other violence.) Being aware that you're different tends to induce introspection: Why am I this way? Why are others not this way? Am I wrong? Are they? Are we just neutrally different? What do different people, groups, and ideologies think of being this way?

Many people think about those questions for years. So what we're pointing out...is only that asking us "to examine" is actually rather odd — chances are we've done so more than most. Chances are we're *\*more\** aware, not *\*less\**, that society can and does have sexual expectations of people — including differing expectations of men than of women, and expectations that are often (to understate it tremendously) deeply disrespectful of women's actual interests.

What all this means, some of us think, is that when we're being asked to "examine", what others want is not for us to think more (as we've already done that) but to agree with their conclusions.

## Pretty Picture

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/06/13/pretty-picture/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/06/13/pretty-picture/)>

**Date:** June 13, 2008

**Category:** Body Mods

**Topics:** lips sewn shut

I came across this image today on ModBlog:

I'm not really into porn or visual erotica, but — wow. When I first saw this, I could practically feel my own lips being sewn shut, and holy crap is that hot.

So is mouths-sewn-shut a particular fetish? I'd never even thought of it before.

## The "Kiss of Fire"

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/06/03/the-kiss-of-fire/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/06/03/the-kiss-of-fire/)>

**Date:** June 3, 2008

**Category:** Body Mods

**Topics:** branding, fire direct, strike brand

Last Tuesday was my 27th birthday. I celebrated, in part, by participating as a demo model in a workshop on branding.

It was fucking *awesome*.

The workshop was taught by Fakir, who also teaches a longer course on branding several times a year, at the Citadel. We learned about and saw all kinds of different methods of brandings done across a variety of cultures, but focused on three main types: (1) strike; (2) fire direct; and (3) electro-cautery. I was fascinated to learn about strike branding, which turned out to be significantly different from my expectations. Fakir showed us some brands that had been fashioned for use in the SM community by a cattle rancher — simply smaller versions of the iron brands commonly used on livestock. Fakir explained (and showed, through a series of photos) why this doesn't work: when brands heal, the scar is generally two to three times larger than the initial brand. Lines that are close to each other smudge together,

and thus such a brand usually results in a big blob. Instead, Fakir uses very thin pieces of straight or curved steel, which he combines to form a larger image, initial, or other pattern. He explained that a small gap has to be left between the strikes: during the healing process, the scarred tissue will expand to connect the segments.

Interestingly, because the temperature of the metal is so hot (around 2500 degrees, if I remember correctly), the pain of the actual strike really isn't that bad — all the nerve endings are cauterized in a fraction of a second. But the psychological intensity of it, at least for me, was huge. My strike was done on my chest while I lay on my back, arms and legs weighted down with sandbags to keep me from moving. I got to watch the metal under the flame of the blowtorch, inches from my face, and saw it gradually turn bright red. And then — the sizzle, and the smell of burnt flesh. The concept of it was far, far scarier and nerve-wracking than the physical sensation, which I actually found to be pretty nice.

Even better was the second type of branding, fire-direct: this involves the use of a type of incense, left on the skin to slowly burn down to ashes. This practice is also called moxibustion and is used extensively in Eastern medicine (using dried sticks of moxa or mugwort). After placing the lit incense on my skin, Fakir let my partner gently blow on it to keep it burning. It felt pleasantly warm, until it started to burn down to the skin — I could feel it getting hotter and hotter, and suddenly I felt the heat burning throughout my chest, not just on the spot where the incense sat. It was dizzying.

The fire-direct branding was actually a very emotional experience for me, and left me with a memory I'm going to always treasure — my partner's face, smiling, gently blowing the fire down into my chest. It was a moment that really synthesized tender love and exquisite pain, and just blew away all of my previous associations with being burned (through self-injury): panic; numbing depression; self-hatred. Even more than the strike, which I felt somewhat detached from, the fire-direct was a beautiful and almost meditative experience, and one I'd really like to have again.

The third type of branding, electro-cautery, was done on a woman who's had extensive work done on her back: beautiful spirals, which on her skin had keloided and left slightly raised patterns all over her. More intricate designs like this are made with the electro-cautery pen, a device used first in hospitals to cauterize arteries and the like. The pen has a tiny, curved piece of metal on the end that is electrically heated up, and then gently drawn over the skin in strokes. The woman being branded said that she really liked the consistency of this kind of branding, the searing heat being drawn over her rather than simply struck for a fraction of a second here, a fraction of a second there.

A week later, the first scab is starting to peel off, and I'm picking at it as much as I can. It's much more painful now than it has been — the first few days were practically painless — and it's going to be a chore to keep peeling off the scabs as they appear, to ensure scarring. The scar seems to have quadrupled in size, and I'm afraid that the end result might be, despite all precautions, just a big blob. But then, that's the thing about branding — it never works quite the same on any two people, and you can never predict exactly how it's going to heal. I hope it turns out the way I'd expected it to, but if it doesn't, I won't be incredibly disappointed. After all, it will only be a slightly lighter patch of skin on my chest, and will likely be virtually unnoticeable by those not looking for it. And really, for me the real satisfaction came in the experience itself: the sensation of the hot metal and the fire on my skin, and the knowledge that I had consciously chosen and taken these things for myself.

## Sex and Play

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/05/13/sex-and-play/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/05/13/sex-and-play/)>

**Date:** May 13, 2008

**Category:** Labels and Roles, Relationships

**Topics:** bdsm play, bdsm scene

My partner and I had a long conversation the other night about what “playing” means to each of us. I had mentioned that we hadn't played in a while, and that I'd really like to take a night to just do



that. What he pointed out, and what I hadn't really thought much about, is that he really has no idea what I mean when I say I want to "play." What sort of activities are and are not included in playing? What distinguishes that from just sex?

Most of the time, when we engage in any sort of BDSM activity, it isn't a scene — it's sex enhanced by things like pain, d/s, and the like. It's simply what naturally comes out of each of us when we start to fool around. It isn't something that's been planned or scheduled beforehand. And it's not what I have in mind, not exactly, when I ask to set aside time in the evening to "play."

A lot of the confusion around these terms is really rooted in what defines BDSM and distinguishes it from "just sex." I feel a very big difference between having d/s-flavored sex and "having a scene" or "playing." My partner feels that it's all the same sort of play, just in varying degrees of intensity.

It's been really hard to tease out exactly what I *do* have in mind when I ask to "play," or when I ask for a "scene." (The latter term is probably a better one for what I'm trying to describe.) I think a large part of that is wanting, as a bottom, for my partner to simply come up with something fun and to direct how everything proceeds — not knowing exactly what he's going to do or ask of me makes everything a little scarier and a lot hotter. And so, my answers to "what do you mean by 'play'?" have generally been along the lines of "something more deliberate" and "something more drawn out, longer than usual." Pretty vague, and not very useful to him. At the same time, I don't want to say, "Well, I'd like you to put a collar on me, and pull my pants down — but don't take your clothes off at all — and then chain me to the bed, and then leave just long enough for me to start getting aggravated, and then come back in and use the flogger on me for a while, and then take me down and..." I don't want to make him feel restricted, or like he has to perform a certain set of things for me to be satisfied.

When we really got into it, I was surprised at how simple and mundane the conditions were that led me to think of something as either "sex" or "play." The first was location: any sort of sexual activity that takes place in bed, especially after we've "gone to bed" (to ostensibly go to sleep), is categorized in my head as "sex." The exceptions to this rule come about when some sort of toy is used, something that I associate strictly with BDSM play (ropes, cuffs, clothespins, collar, etc.), or when pain play is involved (such as pinching and spanking) without any other sort of sexual activity going on. (More on this below.) Conversely, I'm more likely to think of sex that takes place on the floor or in some other location as "play." I also think of any sort of subtle d/s that goes on outside the bedroom (and especially if other people are around) as "play," regardless of how intense or mild it is.

The second factor is time: "Playing" simply takes longer than "sex," at least in my head, and it's something that happens well before it's time to go to sleep. It's something that we deliberately set aside time in the day for (especially if we can make it coincide with the roommates being out of the house). I think of playing as something that usually takes a few hours.

The third factor is sex: While I certainly enjoy all kinds of penetrative and non-penetrative sex (including oral and masturbation), it isn't the first thing that comes to mind when I think of playing. For me, while playing can involve sex of various kinds (and generally I want it to, at least at some point), it also involves activities that are done just for the enjoyment of dominance and pain. This includes things like bondage, boot worship/licking, cutting, spanking, flogging, and the like. The interesting (and confusing) thing is that for me, everything changes once sex enters the mix. If my partner spansks or pinches me while fucking me, that's rough sex. If he orders me to remain still and digs his nails into me, holding his grip firmly while watching me squirm, that's play — even if the pain intensity is the same.

On the other hand, I've also had experiences that I'd classify as "sex within a scene." This would be something like painful penetration used as a means of establishing dominance, or forced penetration with an object, or possibly a rape scene. And of course, I don't think that a d/s scene concluding with sex is at all bad; in fact, I think I'd be pretty disappointed if it didn't.

I'd be interested to hear if other people share any of these complex and perhaps somewhat arbitrary distinctions between "sex" and "play"...

## Talking about BDSM with Vanilla Friends

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/05/06/talking-about-bdsm-with-vanilla-friends/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/05/06/talking-about-bdsm-with-vanilla-friends/)>

**Date:** May 6, 2008

**Category:** Coming Out

How do you do it?

An excerpt from a conversation I had late last night:

Friend A: So I found my new roommate's Myspace profile, and her name on there is *Mistress*. And it gets better. Her boyfriend's tagline just says "Yes, Mistress."

Me: That's awesome! I was actually going to joke about that when you told me he just does everything she says, but they actually *are* in a d/s relationship.

Friend B: Wow, that's really weird.

Me: [Nervous] But there's nothing wrong with it as long as it's negotiated beforehand and it's what gets you off...

Friend B: No, there's nothing wrong with it, but it's just fucking weird.

Friend C: [Speaking to me and Friend A] Why don't you get X and Y [our partners] to do shit for you all the time?

[Awkward silence.]

Me: What the hell are you talking about?

Friend A: Yeah, I like my relationships to be a little more egalitarian than that.

[More discussion of new roommate "Mistress"]

Friend C: Isn't that the sort of thing where, uh, you know, usually money is involved?

Me: [Angry] NO.

[Awkward silence, then a change of subject.]

[I go to bed with a sick feeling in my stomach.]

## BDSM Community, Anarchist Community

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/05/02/bdsm-community-anarchist-community/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/05/02/bdsm-community-anarchist-community/)>

**Date:** May 2, 2008

**Category:** anarchism, The Scene

**Topics:** anarchism and bdsm, anarchist bdsm, bdsm and anarchism

I haven't written in a very long time. Life has been exceptionally busy lately, and I haven't been spending nearly enough time *having* sex, let alone writing about it.

I've also been struggling, for the past few weeks, with writing a post on gender, sexism, and kink. A lot of it involves wrestling with some internal biases that I hold and contradictions that I embody, so I think it's going to be a while yet before I publish something on the subject. It's a difficult topic.

Meanwhile, my head has also been occupied with a lot of thoughts about the BDSM/leather scene, and what aspects are and aren't appealing to me—and why I don't think I'll ever really feel comfortable there.

After attending the Beginner's Dungeon workshop at the Citadel, I was feeling pretty positive about the scene, at least as it exists in San Francisco. I felt that it really was a group open to anyone, where I could feel like I fit in even if I didn't have much in common with other folks beyond a handful of shared sexual fetishes. I felt no pressure to make the scene my life, and felt that it was pretty common for people to just come for a handful of events, only when a workshop offered a skill they wanted to learn or when they wanted to come to play in the dungeon.

I was also pleased that Angela and Iain, who led the workshop, were so adamant that problems within the scene need to stay within the scene, and that those who go to the police rather than first addressing it within the kink community are and should be immediately ostracized, because they put the whole scene at risk when they do so. *Yes*, I thought, *There's something we can agree on. The police aren't here to help you.* But that's just not true; most people in the scene, I'm sure, aren't anti-police. (I heard folks from the Citadel talking about taking part in a "neighborhood watch" program, essentially cooperating with the police to sweep out the homeless and other undesirables of SOMA.)

I'm aware that most people within the scene, like most people outside of the scene, probably don't have a strong critique of authority in general. Like most people, they're probably not all that opposed to certain forms of gender essentialism (which I'll talk more about later). Like most people, they're not interested in animal liberation, and would consider me strange (or perhaps "finicky") for refusing to play with leather.

None of this is to say that I'm shocked that kinky people aren't more politically radical, or to be judgmental of them for not "knowing better," or anything like that. It's to say that sexual preferences aside, I have the impression (and would expect) that kinky people are pretty *normal*. Sure, kinky folks come from all walks of life, but the vast majority of them are going to be, well, just like the vast majority of non-kinky folks. And I tend to have very little in common with those people.

The last event I went to at the Citadel, a very disappointing flogging workshop, made me realize that the scene is never going to feel comfortable to me, not completely, and that shared sexual fetishes don't necessarily make for good community. There's a certain "hobbyists" atmosphere that has pervaded the few kinky events I've attended, which is a turn-off to me. It's taken for granted that you have the expendable income to be dropping \$20-50 on workshops and parties, not to mention the corsets and floggers and trunks full of toys. And leather/BDSM is often, if not usually, considered a complete lifestyle in a way that I'm just not interested in. (Again: good for the people who *are* in love with kink as a lifestyle. Not judging; just not for me.) I am drawn to the scene because of the education and support it can offer, but it feels very strange to get involved in a group where I likely have nothing in common with other people outside of sex. I think I'd always feel like an outsider, like a weirdo.

Yet, at the same time, I also have very different issues and problems when it comes to dating, relationships, and sex than other people in my immediate scenes do. (I feel connected to a lot of overlapping scenes, but just for the sake of argument, I'll simplify it to "anarchists," even though I feel conflicted about identifying myself as a part of the "anarchist scene.") I'm not just talking about those who'd judge me for my preferences, although that's certainly a concern of mine. I'm talking about the fact that when my partner and I are having problems related to our d/s or to a scene that went badly, I can't tell my friends about it, because it would make them uncomfortable. If I start wearing my partner's bracelet permanently, I can't explain its significance to people, or tell them how happy it makes me to wear it. I can't tell anyone about a lot of honestly life-changing experiences I've had through BDSM, because describing them would probably sound icky or disturbing to most of my friends.

Now, of course, part of this is just my own fear of being out — but that alone indicates to me a need for some sort of group of people, however small, that I could talk to about this sort of thing without being afraid that they wouldn't judge me (or that everyone in my extended circle of friends would know the next day). I crave a group of people to talk to, to share ideas and stories with, even to skillshare with or, maybe, to play with. But I want that group to also be people I'd want to hang out with regardless of our orientations/fetishes. I want to have discussions of d/s roleplaying with an understanding that everyone in the room thinks real-life authoritarian scenarios (e.g. cops, general power-over dynamics) are fucked up. I want DIY toy-making nights that don't involve (and laud the qualities of) leather. I want workshops that are peer-taught and free.

Am I crazy? Am I just not looking in the right niches of the mainstream BDSM/leather scene (if you can believe I actually just wrote "mainstream BDSM")? Am I being too demanding, or too unrealistic?

The jury is out. I'll report back with the verdict.

## Catharsis

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/04/11/catharsis/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/04/11/catharsis/)>

**Date:** April 11, 2008

**Category:** Masochism & Pain

One of the things I hadn't mentioned from the Beginner's Dungeon class I went to was the discussion of chemicals produced in the body during SM and their effects on both tops and bottoms. At the time, it all sort of went past me in a stream of "yeah yeah, endorphins, I know this." Angela, one of the presenters, mentioned her first experience with cathartic crying during a scene, and how much it surprised her — she wasn't unhappy, or upset, but there were the tears, flowing down her face.

For me, I have certainly found catharsis in crying, but only when I *am* upset, when I feel like I *need* to cry to release the tension and worries I've built up. It's still linked to a negative emotional state, for me. And so, I've always associated crying during or after a scene with either something going wrong or reaching a dark emotional space that needs to be touched, but that isn't pleasant.

The other day, after the first really long scene we've had in a while (and which was pretty much all flogging and spanking), I suddenly started to cry. My partner held me and comforted me, and I tried to tell him that I wasn't upset, that nothing was wrong, that I didn't know what the deal was with these tears out of nowhere. Mostly, it just came out as sobs, interspersed with laughter — an incredulous laugh, an "I can't believe I'm crying, what the hell?". And a few minutes later, after the crying had subsided, I mentioned to him the workshop I'd just been at, and started talking about how I thought the crying really was just catharsis not from emotional stress, but purely from all those chemicals I'd created while bottoming for a couple of hours. He just smiled. "I know. I knew you were fine, because you were laughing, too."

The human body is pretty fucking weird.

## Beginner's Dungeon

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/04/04/beginners-dungeon/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/04/04/beginners-dungeon/)>

**Date:** April 4, 2008

**Category:** Coming Out, Public Play, The Scene, Workshops

**Topics:** bdsm scene, Citadel, dungeon

I went to a "Beginner's Dungeon" class at the Citadel last night, one in a series of workshops put on by Edukink for those new to the scene.

The class was four hours long. *Four*. My head hurt by the time I left, and most of the material wasn't even particularly new to me. I can't imagine what it must have been like for someone who was truly a beginner, someone who actually needed the definitions of "subspace" and "aftercare." I met one man who was in the same situation I was: has played privately for several years, but is just now dipping his toes into public play and the larger BDSM scene. Boi, who went with me, has the same background as well. I imagine that quite a few people there, if not the vast majority, were people who were not complete beginners, but who were apprehensive about bringing their sex life into this public arena.

I've assimilated a lot of the jargon and protocols of the scene while learning about kink from books and online, which made the class a little too basic for me, at times. But it also got me thinking about how interesting and bizarre it is that I can comfortably talk the talk without ever having been to a play party. I know basic safety issues and dungeon etiquette without having been taught them. I'm aware of which issues are controversial in the scene, and I don't hold any of the false ideas about BDSM that the instructors spent so long dispelling.

Even if some of the material was old to me, the overall workshop was incredibly beneficial. There were definitely a few rules and points of protocol at the Citadel that I hadn't known about, and that were good to learn. Breath play, in any form, is not allowed. I supposed I could have guessed that. "Mild"

blood play and wax play *are* allowed, which surprised me, as long as the participants put down their own tarp beforehand and are careful about clean-up. Barriers are not required for oral sex, another happy surprise. As far as monitoring of scenes goes, I learned that DMs will check on anyone who safewords “red” and who is not immediately taken out of scene. The presenters assured me that it didn’t mean a DM would barge into a scene and force the person to stop immediately, but rather would err on the side of caution and talk to the bottom about whether or not they were really able to continue. They also mentioned that it’s a good idea to talk to the DMs around your area about what you’ll be doing if your scene is going to be “intense,” or involve heavy play. It’s a little difficult for me to figure out what that means, exactly, but it’s certainly good to keep in mind that when playing in a dungeon, a scene might be interrupted by a well-intentioned DM if you’re doing something that starts to look like “too much.” I think I’d like to learn more about DM protocol before I play publicly...

I also learned that fucking of any kind (with barriers, of course) is completely okay at the Citadel. This is pretty unusual for BDSM spaces, as I understand it. The presenters characterized those who were against public fucking in a play space as being uptight and feeling that kink was somehow superior to sex; one woman in attendance objected, in good humor, and indicated that she wasn’t too keen on it, but that she also wasn’t puritanical about her kink. (Is that an oxymoron?)

There was an interesting discussion of privacy and scene names, which I think I’ll write more about in a separate post.

Most of all, I had the happy impression that the scene, and play parties in particular, were totally welcoming of people who didn’t really want to make the scene their life. I left the workshop feeling not at all pressured into joining any discussion groups or listserves or volunteering or attending munches or anything else. Before, I had been afraid that it would seem improper to show up at Citadel workshops and parties with my partner, play only with each other, and never get involved with the scene in any deeper way. Now, I feel comfortable that maybe, there is a place for us there, too.

Which is good, because I think Saint Andrew’s Crosses are totally hot, and there’s really no space for one in my bedroom.

## Inhibitions

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/03/28/inhibitions/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/03/28/inhibitions/)>

**Date:** March 28, 2008

**Category:** Coming Out

**Topics:** bdsm and anarchism, Coming Out, self-confidence, sexuality

The workshop on BDSM & Anarchism at the BASTARD anarchist conference last Sunday was fantastic; kudos to Submissive Boi for making it happen.

I started writing a response to the panel, discussing the issues that were raised there, exploring the ideas it brought up. I still intend to write more on the subject. But really, the thing I came away from the panel with was a new sense of just how much it’s going to take for me to ever be open about my sexuality.

I went into the panel hoping that I’d be able to engage in conversation about BDSM in a public setting, to be able to be out and open and talk freely about my ideas and desires. But within the first few minutes after I’d sat down, one of the panelists asked the group, “How many people here would say they have a fairly large amount of knowledge about BDSM?” I started sweating as I tried not to look around me at all the people in the room; my hand stayed down.

I was really, really happy to see such open and non-judgemental discussion taking place about BDSM in an anarchist crowd, and was excited that the panelists as well as members of the audience were able to speak from a personal perspective, unafraid of anyone else’s reaction. But I wasn’t able to participate. I couldn’t. I couldn’t stand the idea of people turning around to look at me as I asked a question or

made a comment that would, I felt, mark me as someone who is, gasp, kinky. More than that, I think my fear was being seen as someone who is, gasp, *sexual*.

It's only been over the last few years that I've started feeling comfortable with myself as a sexual being. Part of that is because I'd never before been able to explore my masochistic and submissive side with someone who truly reflected that desire back in his sadism and dominance. Other lovers had always expressed a desire for me, of course, but it wasn't until I felt someone truly desire me *as* a submissive and *as* a masochist — *because* I loved to be at his feet, not in spite of it — that I felt sexy and attractive. But part of it, too, is just being with someone who is completely comfortable with talking about his own sexuality and his own desires, and who encourages me to open up without being forceful or judgmental about it.

Sometimes, I forget that this is a long process. I write openly on here, and then am shocked and ashamed that I can't speak in quite the same way in front of a group of people, or freeze up and break down before going to a class at the Citadel. I feel upset and worthless when I see other people, especially people younger than me, who can speak so freely about things I often still find difficult to think about.

I need to stop feeling so bad about that. Yes, it sucks that I'm so inhibited and shy when it comes to talking about sex. I want that to change. But it isn't just going to happen overnight — not with decades of heavy repression of my sexuality still weighing me down. I can't look at others as a model of what I should be, how I should speak and act, how I should look. I think I need to take the word "should" out of my vocabulary for a while.

## Piercings, Part Two

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/03/17/piercings-part-two/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/03/17/piercings-part-two/)>

**Date:** March 17, 2008

**Category:** Body Mods, Masochism & Pain

**Topics:** endorphins, healing, nipple piercing, pain

It's been kind of an intense week.

A week ago, I found myself questioning everything I thought I'd come to terms with about my sexuality. Unsurprisingly, these thoughts first took the form of wanting to get rid of my sexuality altogether, a general purge, pushing all the dangerous, scary sex out of my life completely. It was, I thought, time to accept that I just couldn't handle this, that I didn't want it. Done. Finished.

Within 24 hours, I was back in bed with my partner, and everything felt good. Different, and still shaky, but good. A few days later, I broke down again when faced with the prospect of going to a play workshop I'd wanted to attend for months, terrified of being seen, not comfortable with exposing myself like that in public, even among others like me. And within a week, I got my nipples pierced while a half-dozen people watched.

About four months ago, I tried to get this piercing done, but couldn't bring myself to go through with it. I wrote about some of the meaning it held for me, and why I was so hesitant to actually get it done. Re-reading it now, I realize there's another level of meaning to my reluctance to get the piercings, why I was so focused on thoughts of how much aftercare they'd need, the fears of something going wrong, getting damaged. [Ahem. *Aftercare*. Fears of *something going wrong*.]

I knew that these piercings would have a very strong symbolic power for me, and that one of the reasons I wanted them so badly was that they were so connected to my image of myself as a sexual being. My nipples have always been very sensitive, and up until a few years ago, I couldn't bear having them played with at all; the idea of having them pierced would have made me cringe. They're also a part of my body that I've pretty much ignored for most of my life, along with my breasts in general. The piercings would be symbolic of how far I've come in both those departments: having pushed my boundaries on what I thought I could take, having expanded my vision of what activities I can find

pleasure in, having accepted and learned to revel in the deep satisfaction I can find in pain; and learning to love my body as it is, finally believing that I can be considered attractive and sexy.

What I didn't realize was that the aftercare, the thing I was so worried about, was symbolic, too. I finally understood this last night, after a sudden freak-out about how careful I was going to have to be, how much I was going to have to focus on taking care of myself, on keeping the piercings clean, on avoiding contact with body fluids, on how it was going to change my sex life. My partner calmed me down and assured me that I could handle it, that he knew I was ready for this commitment. And all of a sudden, I knew what I was afraid of. It *is* a commitment, and in more ways than one. It's a physical representation of a lot of shit I've kept inside for so long, and of an awakened sexual identity that has forced me to become more aware of my body, my limits, and my needs. The symbolism of caring for my raw piercings, of treating them with care and helping the fresh wounds heal, is incredibly important, too. Seeing it in that way has made everything seem more manageable, and makes me even more sure that I made the right decision.

I got my piercings at the Fakir Piercing Intensive, taught by the "Father of the Modern Primitive Movement" Fakir Musafar. I found out very last minute that the class needed more people for students to practice on; my decision to get my piercings done there was somewhat spontaneous. I liked the idea that if I someday decided to take out the jewelry and let the piercings heal (whether because they got infected, made my nipples way too sensitive, or just were taking too long to heal), it wouldn't feel like a complete wash to me, because the piercings would have also been a learning experience for someone else. I would feel free to change my mind later without feeling too disappointed about it. As it was, I was really happy that I decided to get pierced at the class rather than in a studio. It felt much more personal, and took much longer; one of my two piercers had never done nipples before, so there was a lot of instruction and advice being given as he marked me and got everything ready. I would have thought being pierced by novices would have made me more nervous, but I felt very safe throughout, and confident that my piercers knew what they were doing. The instructor sat next to me and had me focus on my breathing, grounding me and helping me "sink." Another person came up to my feet and gently rested his hands on them, then on my shins. It seemed perfectly natural, and felt comforting, like someone holding my hand.

The actual piercings were simultaneous — one piercer on each nipple — and slightly unexpected. I wasn't quite ready for the piercings when they happened, and was mid-breath. (I had hoped to be able to slowly exhale as the needles went through, the technique I've used in the past.) I gasped as they pierced me, and then started laughing at my reaction. Strangely, the pain in one nipple was sharper and more prominent (and felt better) than in the other, which felt duller and took longer to dissipate. The pain was somehow both more and less intense than I'd expected; at first, it felt stronger than I was ready for, but then, it also hurt for a shorter amount of time than, say, having clothespins taken off.

Afterwards, I talked to the piercer who'd never done a nipple piercing before. He told me about the endorphin rush he'd had, as well, which made the experience all the better; it was something that we had shared, not something that a detached professional had simply performed, not a service given. He took a picture with me, and both piercers gave me big (but gentle) hugs before I put my shirt on and headed home, lightheaded and blissed out. I couldn't have imagined a better piercing experience.

## Knife Play

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/02/29/knife-play/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/02/29/knife-play/)>

**Date:** February 29, 2008

**Category:** Workshops

**Topics:** bdsm, cutting, knife play, knives

Last night, my partner and I did not go to the knife play workshop we'd both been looking forward to for months. I have pretty much the worst cold I've ever had, and we both decided it wouldn't be worth it to go to something like that if I was going to be too sick to enjoy it.

Sigh.

Knife play is something we've been talking about for a little while, and something that I've wanted for a very long time. The idea of actually cutting me, however, was a hard limit for him until recently, because he didn't feel comfortable with drawing blood. (That ended the night he accidentally drew blood while using a pinwheel on my back, and found that his reaction was decidedly different than he'd expected; a few minutes later, he whispered, "I never thought I'd say this, but I really wish I could cut you right now.")

So we both want it, but as of yet, haven't played with it at all — it seems like something so potentially dangerous that we'd really need to have some hands-on instruction the first time. But now I'm wondering: is that really the case? Is there any safe way to practice cutting another person, or any safe way to do it without going to a class or workshop?

For knife players out there: how did you first start? How did you learn how deep you could cut, and how did you choose your first knives?

## Anti-BDSM Anarchist Dogma

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/02/21/anti-bdsm-anarchist-dogma/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/02/21/anti-bdsm-anarchist-dogma/)>

**Date:** February 21, 2008

**Category:** anarchism

**Topics:** anarchism, bdsm, dogma

For someone who's chosen to stamp "anarchist" on the banner of her blog, I've said suspiciously little here about the intersection of my politics and my sexuality. In part, that's because I'm sort of at a loss for what I would say.

But now, I've been talking to Submissive Boi about her workshop/panel on BDSM for an upcoming anarchist conference, and it's probably about damn time that I start reflecting a bit on this topic.

I think I should start with the reason why this workshop is even going to be included at this conference, which has the theme, this year, of "dogma and religion." When Boi proposed this to the conference organizers, the first question they had was, naturally, "so how does that relate to dogma?" She responded that she felt it was important to question sexual dogmas within the anarchist scene, specifically the notion that one's sexuality should look like one's politics, i.e. egalitarian, non-hierarchical, etc.

At times, I've wondered about how widespread this is: anarchists feeling that BDSM is "problematic" because it looks authoritarian (=wrong). But then, I've thought, "Come on. Are there really that many anarchists out there who think BDSM is a problem, or who judge kinky folk for playing with power? In the mainstream *feminist* scene, sure. But among anarchists?"

Recently, Boi wrote about an experience with a potential lover, another anarchist and a big fan of de Sade. Naturally she expected that he was a sadist as well as a Sadean — but when pressed on the issue, it turned out that not only was he *not* inclined toward sexual sadism, he actually had some degree of contempt for submissives and bottoms, saying that he thought they could be pathetic. He explained to her that he wouldn't want to be in a D/s relationship, because, as she recalls, "if he was someone's top there would be no line drawn for him and that his dom personality would carry in the rest of the relationship."

This came as something of a shock to me. I realized that the only conversations around BDSM that I've had, of late, have either been with my partner or the smart and politically-savvy kinky bloggers I've found online, and that this has encased me in a sort of bubble. I've come to expect that BDSM is something largely accepted as not being in conflict with one's politics — accepted as play, not reality



— and that while people may be squicked by some of it, or make jokes about it, it wasn't really a big issue.

But it is. There are still intelligent people in my extended community who think it's okay to speak derisively of women and men who are sexually submissive, or who assume that BDSM play in the bedroom will result in a normalized, consistent streak of patriarchal or authoritarian dominance in their everyday lives. And it's really difficult for me to respond to that with anything but, "No, you're just wrong!"

So hopefully, over the next few weeks, I'll be writing a more articulate response than that. I'll be talking about political correctness and its history in the radical feminist movement, reviewing the few materials already in existence on BDSM and anarchism, and considering just how much my sexuality affects my everyday life, my behavior and personality, and how I relate to non-sexual power dynamics. The big question, for me, is: if BDSM is "just sex," a form of play unrelated to my "normal" life (if I separate my sexual identity as a submissive from my political identity as an anarchist), then how can I explain something like this?

If you have anything to contribute to a discussion of BDSM and anarchism, have ideas for the panel, or would like to attend the conference (March 23 in Berkeley), you should hit up Boi at [submissiveboi.blogspot.com](mailto:submissiveboi.blogspot.com) or write to me at [subversivesub \[at\] gmail \[dot\] com](mailto:subversivesub[at]gmail[dot]com).

## Trust After Mistakes

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/02/13/trust-after-mistakes/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/02/13/trust-after-mistakes/)>

**Date:** February 13, 2008

**Category:** Communication and Consent, Mistakes

**Topics:** D/s, domination, mistakes during sex

It's taken me a long time to get over my fear that my partner will make a mistake while dominating me, unintentionally doing something that actually injures me or crosses a boundary I'm not ready to cross. In the past, it's been really difficult for me to "come back" to a scene if anything goes wrong — and for me, all it takes for something to "go wrong" is for me to have any sense that my partner is not fully in control of the situation. All it takes is a stroke aimed at my ass to go to my lower back or my leg, and I become afraid. It doesn't really matter whether or not the action itself hurt or disturbed me; it's all about maintaining my trust that he'll take care of me in a scene, that he is competent and conscious enough to handle anything that comes up. But I've realized that what that means, sometimes, is that I'm holding him to an impossible standard: I expect him to be the perfect dom, to never make a mistake.

(NOTE: This post contains explicit sexual imagery and descriptions of BDSM play.)

Last night, he slipped. While fucking me, for just a second, he accidentally slipped into my ass. This isn't something that is off-limits between us, but rather, is something that I wasn't expecting and recognized immediately as a mistake, a slip, and this was translated to my brain as "he's not paying attention."

I got very quiet and still, which is always an indicator that something's wrong. He stopped, and stroked my head. "Do you want to stop? Are you okay?"

"Yes, I'm okay," I said. "I don't want to stop. But could you *not* dominate me for a minute?" He immediately continued to fuck me, but pushed his body up so that his weight wasn't forcing me down, and for a minute, the sex was...just sex. And then, a few minutes later, he pushed me back down again and continued the way he was before. The position that he'd slipped out of, before. The position that was making me exceptionally nervous. I knew I had to say something, and just started talking. "I'm afraid right now. I can't trust you, I haven't gotten back to trusting you yet, I don't want to stop but I can't do this."

And of course, that was a heavy blow to him. He tried to continue; not saying anything about my comment, he rolled off of me and ordered me to come. He then curled up on the other side of the bed, his back to me. I had told him that I couldn't trust him, and that was pretty much the worst possible thing I could have said to him while we were having D/s sex. I felt awful. He felt awful. I held him for a while. I let him talk. We still felt awful. More silence.

Then I touched his face and looked into his eyes. "I'm still yours," I said. I felt his body sink, relaxing. I had been holding his hand, and moved my hand so that he was now clutching my wrist. He laughed a little. "Even when mistakes happen. I'm still yours," I repeated. He kissed me. And then we kissed some more. And then he flipped me on my back and we picked up our scene where we'd left off, and he dug his nails into my cheek and slapped my face, and everything was beautiful.

## More Pain Processing

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/02/04/more-pain-processing/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/02/04/more-pain-processing/)>

**Date:** February 4, 2008

**Category:** Masochism & Pain

**Topics:** burning, Masochism, pain, pain processing, self-injury, SI, submission

The other day, my partner was looking at the scars left from the last time I used self-inflicted pain to jostle me out of a numbing depression. "I can't imagine burning myself like that," he said. I pointed to the brandings on his hands, markings that were far, far more painful than anything I've ever endured.

"That's different," he said. "It's different if it's someone else doing it."

That struck me as so odd. For me, pain has always been easier to endure when I'm the one doing it; I think it's because there's an element of control that I feel when I'm doing it myself. I've pierced my own ears several times by myself, and the pain was, I thought, pretty minimal. Yet when I went to get one of them redone by a professional piercer (I love self-piercing, but have come to accept that I do a pretty crappy job of it), I was in a cold sweat, and it hurt much more than I'd experienced at home.

Bringing it back to erotic pain, Juliet at The Power of And writes that in her experience, self-inflicted pain is "about control and clarity," while other-inflicted pain [received in SM play] is about giving up that control, "letting someone else take responsibility." For her, the two are completely separate, and so it makes perfect sense that she'd want different kinds of pain at different times:

*When I feel sufficiently badly stressed or upset, I get both extremely protective of my boundaries, and confused within them; I start to feel very detached from my body. Letting someone else take control feels far too dangerous. SI [self-injury] is a way of reattaching, reconnecting – and for that to work I have to be right there, part of the reconnection. Bottoming, for me, creates detachment – in a different and much more positive way. So for me, the two things are a very long way apart; despite the superficial similarity of "pain".*

All of that makes perfect sense to me. I commented on her blog that I have experienced a few occasions where other-inflicted pain has helped me through a tough mental block—but then, the pain I received on those occasions was not in the context of a scene. It wasn't play. And so I think, at least for me, the crucial difference is whether or not my desire for pain is of an erotic or therapeutic nature. Especially because pretty much all play is linked to the underlying D/s of my relationship with my partner, it's difficult for me to receive pain in an eroticized context without it being tied to a state of submission, to a lack of control. And when I'm stressed, when I'm concerned with keeping myself intact, when I feel like shrinking away from an overstimulating world and reasserting my boundaries, submission play just isn't something I want to be messing with.

But pain is. Controlled, almost ritualized pain—and like Juliet, I find that being the one to inflict it does provide a sort of reconnection that other-inflicted pain just can't provide. Still, I wonder if there aren't some ways in which my partner can help in this, as he has before, as long as the pain is something

I can separate from eroticized pain, something I can separate from submission. How different would it have felt if he'd been the one to burn me?

## Ownership, Part Two

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/02/01/ownership-part-two/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/02/01/ownership-part-two/)>

**Date:** February 1, 2008

**Category:** Communication and Consent, D/s, Relationships

After a few difficult, intense conversations about the bracelet and everything I attach to that symbol, I decided that I didn't want to wear it — not yet. While I feel that we're pretty much on the same page about what it's going to mean for us and how it will and will not change our relationship, I'm still hesitant. I'm hesitant because I'm not sure that I'm ready for what I want.

To me, ownership connotes a deeper level of D/s than what we've previously done. It means that while I certainly still have the ability to safeword and have it respected, I no longer can simply turn him down if I am able to do what he asks of me. It means that my body is for his pleasure, not mine, and that it is his choice whether to allow me pleasure or pain as well — and that if he does choose to give me pleasure, it will only be *because it pleases him to do so*. And even writing that makes my body start to tingle.

(All of this is really fucking with my concept of what consent means.)

To bring it all back to that bracelet, the symbol for all of this — we've come up with something that I hope will address both my fear of not being ready for the deeper submission I feel such a symbol demands of me, and my fear that he's not as interested in all of this as I am. He will train me.

I'd had this in mind for a while, and I was afraid when I suggested it. Afraid that he would find it too demanding, afraid that he wouldn't think he was able to do it. Instead, he laughed, took both my wrists in his hands, and said, "So what you want is for me to train you. To train you to be a better submissive. To train you to be fully mine. And you were worried that I wouldn't like that idea?"

I had to laugh, too.

We've started, slowly. I don't think I can really articulate the sort of minute changes to our sexual relationship that have been taking place, so I think for now, I'll leave it at that.

## Pain Processing

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/01/25/pain-processing/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/01/25/pain-processing/)>

**Date:** January 25, 2008

**Category:** BDSM & Psych, Masochism & Pain, Mistakes

**Topics:** Masochism & Pain, pain processing

While proofreading an acupuncture manual last week, I came across a warning: "Those suffering from stress are usually more sensitive to pain."

My relative enjoyment or hatred of pain is something that's confounded me for a while. Some types of pain are fine; others aren't. Some pain I can enjoy on one part of my body, but on other parts of my body the same degree of pain is intolerable. Some days, I revel in pain, fully eroticize it, let it drive me into ecstasy; other days, the thought of any sort of pain makes me curl up into a ball and cover myself with a blanket.

Recently, I've realized that there is definitely a strong connection between particular mental states and how I process pain, and that at times when I'm anxious or depressed, it only makes sense that a whipping wouldn't feel quite so good as it did last week.

Some of that runs counter to what my conscious mind thinks I need; when I'm stressed, when I've had a hard day at work, when I want to escape from the world, I often fantasize about giving

up power, surrendering, complete submission. And often, those fantasies involve quite a lot of pain. It seems somehow logical to me that a good solution for stress would involve pain, in part because I've sometimes inflicted pain on myself in order to break myself out of difficult mental states, in part because there's always a strong caretaking element of that sort of play, or at least as I've experienced it within a loving, long-term relationship.

But then, maybe all I really want is the caretaking, at times like this. This past week, I was startled at how any sort of pain was completely unbearable for me, the same pain that a week before had me begging for more. It threw me, because I was so desperately wanting some sort of relief from the internal pain and stress and depression, and had expected that heavy S/M play would provide at least some sort of respite. Instead, it seemed to make it worse. So we stopped, and haven't been playing for the week since then.

And yet, on Sunday, when things were so bad that I shut myself up in my room all day and shook and cried for no discernible reason at all, I eventually turned to pain to make it stop. To still myself. To cut through the fog in my head. And it worked.

I'm still not sure why.

## For the Very First Time

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/01/11/for-the-very-first-time/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/01/11/for-the-very-first-time/)>

**Date:** January 11, 2008

**Category:** D/s, Smut

**Topics:** D/s, submission, surrender

This is a story about how I realized that everything I thought was submission wasn't, and how a few seconds changed my entire perspective on my sexuality. (NOTE: This post contains explicit sexual imagery and descriptions of BDSM play.)

He was fucking me in the ass, and it felt amazing; it was one of those times when everything just feels so intensely *good*. I was drunk on sensation and the sheer pleasure of it.

After a while, as the lubrication dried up and friction increased, it became less pleasant, and soon after, downright irritating.

"How do you feel?" he asked.

"It hurts," I complained.

"Does it," he murmured, and fucked me harder. "It feels wonderful to me."

That was the moment that crystallized everything. In one second, I thought in a panic, "He's not stopping," and then in the next, "Of course he's not; 'it hurts' is not a safeword. And unless I safeword, he's free to use me for his pleasure. That's what it means to truly submit. You are his."

And then, a new feeling, a swimmy, delirious feeling in my head. *I am his*. I give myself to him completely in this, the surrender of myself to sensation not pleasurable, nor pleasurably painful, but decidedly unpleasant and uncomfortable. And in that, in that surrender, I touched a state of submission I had never felt. The physical discomfort was still there, yes, but somehow, within these few seconds, it had been transformed into something else. I was receiving sensations that gave me no erotic pleasure (unlike more direct pain, flogging, spanking, etc., which does), but the fact that I was choosing to continue in spite of that, because I really was giving my body over him to do with as he pleased — and that he knew the power in this, and had accepted it — gave me an erotic charge I'd never felt before.

## Assumptions and Expectations

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/01/05/assumptions-and-expectations/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/01/05/assumptions-and-expectations/)>

**Date:** January 5, 2008

**Category:** D/s, Relationships

**Topics:** D/s relationships

It's always been a struggle for me to talk to my partners — or anyone — about sex. In part, I know that's because my earliest lessons on sex were awkward and uncomfortable, and were more concerned with "don't" than anything else. But it's also because of my specific desires around D/s and sado-masochism, and my initial experiences in exploring those desires.

I confessed to my ex-boyfriend, some four or five years ago, that I thought I was a submissive, and that I wanted to explore more of that in our sex life. I bought a book on rope bondage, and some cheap handcuffs, and nervously prodded him into using them on me. He did everything you're supposed to do, in such a situation: he didn't judge me, was enthusiastic about trying new things, and, in fact, never denied any of my requests. (Of course, at the time, there weren't very many; I didn't really know what I wanted, yet.)

But it never really did anything for me, because — whether or not this is true — I could never be convinced that he really wanted to be doing it, that it wasn't just him being a good boyfriend and indulging my fetishes. Personally, I only can be turned on by any act of BDSM if I believe that the person doing it to me is doing it *for their own pleasure*, not just for mine. But I know now that while I may have been correct in my assumptions, there's probably nothing he could have done to convince me that he really got off on dominating and controlling me: I couldn't accept that I actually wanted a partner who would not only fulfil my own horrible perverted fantasies, but was sick enough to be turned on by it himself, as well. I handled it terribly. I would insist that he wasn't doing it right, that I didn't feel like he was in control; it wasn't good for me unless he really wanted it, I would say. He would insist that he *was* into it — and I still wouldn't believe him. All of that, of course, is incredibly painful to hear from your partner. It's not something I look back on with a great deal of pride.

The point of all of this is to say that I have something of a history of (a) not feeling comfortable with my own sexuality and kinks, and (b) not trusting that my sexual partner is actually interested in the sort of sex and the sort of relationship I desire.

It really shouldn't come as much of a surprise to me, then, that the conversations my current partner and I have had about my desire to be owned, to wear his bracelet, have been extremely difficult and emotional. But it's caught me off guard, a little, just how terrified I am that his agreeing to the bracelet, and to pretty much anything new that I suggest, is him just...being agreeable. Just doing what will make me happy. And that, of course, would mean that he doesn't really understand what any of this actually means to me.

I should know by now that it does. All of it. His dominance and sadism run as deep as my submission and masochism, and he's never given me any reason to think otherwise. But I finally realized, last night, that most of this perceived inequality in our interest stems from the fact that we approach our D/s in very different ways.

When I'm curious about something, my first instinct is to research it, and then write about it (whether publicly or privately). I've sometimes gone so far as to make phone calls to corporate headquarters or file information requests with the police to get information not for a story I'm writing, but just for something I want to know. So naturally, when I began to explore BDSM, my inclination was to learn as much as I could, through books, blogs, websites, and classes and community groups, and to process all of it through thinking about it, talking, and writing.

When *he* has something he's curious about and wants to explore, he simply goes out and does it. With BDSM, he feels that books haven't really helped him learn anything about how to construct a scene or how to play safely; that's only come through direct experience with me, with cautious trial-and-error, with communication about what works and what doesn't. And that hasn't really been much of an issue thus far, because we haven't really done much that put me at risk, physically or emotionally. (We both agree that for more "at-risk" stuff we're interested in, like knife play, some classes are in order before we start experimenting.)

But I realize now that I've been disappointed in him for not coming at this in the same way that I do; I've been disappointed that he doesn't write about all of this, doesn't comment here, doesn't read any BDSM nonfiction, doesn't initiate taking classes with me. And that's just holding him up to an absurd and unrealistic expectation. There's no reason why he should have to approach BDSM in the same way that I do. It doesn't make him any less interested in sex with me because he doesn't blog about it afterward; it doesn't make him any less concerned with my safety because he's never read any "beginners guides" to S/M.

The other major difference between us is that while I feel a need to spend a lot of time thinking about what all of this means, and still worry about whether or not my desires are "okay," he's more concerned with whether or not something *feels* good and right, not whether he's thought about it a lot first. "I don't want to own you just because we've discussed it and decided on it," he said to me last night, "I want to own you *because you belong to me*. I want you to be mine because that's what your heart desires."

In the end, simply, it is what my heart desires. And I need to trust that it's in his heart, too.

## Ownership, Part One

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/01/02/ownership-part-one/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2008/01/02/ownership-part-one/)>

**Date:** January 2, 2008

**Category:** D/s, Relationships

**Topics:** collars, lifestyle D/s, ownership, self-improvement

I'm thinking this is going to be a difficult post to write.

A little over two months ago, I finally worked up the courage to ask my partner something I'd been thinking about for a long time: I asked for a mark to wear. Neither of us was too keen on the idea of a tattoo or branding, and we finally decided that a simple bracelet of some sort would be the way to go. I suggested something that I could wear all the time (i.e., that wouldn't chafe in the shower or draw attention at work), and so we looked around on the internet until we found a stainless steel mesh bracelet that we both loved. It's now sitting in a box on my dresser, waiting. The reason I haven't begun wearing it, yet, is that while we're both excited about it, we're also extremely nervous about its significance for each of us.

It's been hard to figure out exactly what this is going to mean for our relationship, and what each of us wants it to mean. At a very basic level, it's a symbol of commitment and devotion, and a nice little reminder of our sexual relationship to make me smile throughout the day. But at a deeper level, it also connotes ownership — that in some sense, I belong to him. And that's where it starts getting difficult.

About a week after I brought the subject up for the first time, I had a strange and disturbing experience. He had organized an event that I had wanted to attend, but the weather had turned nasty, cold and rainy. I had rain gear with me, but it was a good three miles away, and I was already feeling sick. I was also feeling pretty distressed and overwhelmed, for a variety of reasons, and had a sudden panic attack that I was sure would prevent me from going anywhere that evening. Even though I knew it was important to him that I should be there, and even though I really wanted to go, I felt like I just couldn't do it.

Then, I suddenly thought about the bracelet he'd agreed to give me, and imagined it around my wrist. I imagined him telling me to come to him, giving me an order. I immediately got dressed, got on my bike, and left. The ride through the rain was completely fine, and even enjoyable. And I ended up having a fantastic evening.

What the hell does that mean?

There are a few issues I've been struggling with, when it comes to this bracelet. The first is the sort of thing I just talked about: I associate it with an extension of our D/s to non-sexual situations. There are, of course, several different reasons for him to use his dominance in a non-scene way. One

reason would be to assert himself in a way that gives us both a sort of sexual charge, with a promise of more to come later; he's already done this a few times in semi-public settings, generally giving me instructions to not move, or forcing my arm behind my back, digging his nails into me, etc. I think this bracelet means, to both of us, that we'll be doing a lot more of this, of course with the caveat that it doesn't become too overt when we're in public places. That's the easy bit. The other reason, the one that makes me a little nervous, is that he could use his dominance in order to get me to do something I don't think I can do or don't want to do. (And really, the issue is more the fact that I've fantasized about such things rather than whether or not he'd begin actually issuing orders like this; I don't think he would.)

Like it or not, I have a strong desire for him to use his dominance in this way — to order me to do something I don't think I can do. Part of this makes sense to me, because receiving difficult orders from him in sexual situations has always made me feel strong and confident; I know he would never give me an order I couldn't actually follow, would never tell me to do something if he didn't have complete confidence in my ability to do it. When I feel that, it makes me realize that there are plenty of things I think I just can't manage that I really, really can. But I feel like there's a difference between him using our D/s to show me that I can take even more lashes than I believed possible and using it to help me get out of the house when I'm depressed.

I understand that there are some folks in D/s relationships who use that dynamic as a sort of general self-improvement for the submissive, helping him to overcome bad habits and encourage good ones. (Dev has a good post about this, [here](#).) And I know that it probably works really well, for some people. But personally, it scares the hell out of me; and it scared my partner, too. Having him encourage me to do things I'm not sure I can, to take chances — that's fine. Hearing him tell me that I'm strong and smart and capable enough to handle things I'm afraid of — wonderful. But to need him to *make* me do something in order for me to actually do it, to need his encouragement and support come in the form of an order...that makes me pretty uncomfortable.

I suppose it's that "need" part that makes me nervous; the problem I have with this dynamic isn't just that he's ordering me to do something for my own good, but that I'm afraid I'll come to rely on him for it, that I'll become so accustomed to having him tell me what to do that I won't be able to tell *myself* what to do. Part of me is just scared that I have such fantasies at all, and worries about what it all means. Up until now, when it comes to BDSM in my life, I've done a fairly good job at distinguishing fantasy and play from what I *actually* want my life to be like. But this feels very different to me. I can't explain it away as easily, because it isn't something confined to the bedroom, something I fantasize about because it's a sexual turn-on. I mean, here I am, an independent, feminist, anarchist woman, daydreaming about my boyfriend directing my daily life in some very fundamental and seemingly non-sexual ways.

Of course, maybe the "whys" of this issue don't actually matter all that much, when confronted with the overwhelming difficulty of the "hows" of carrying out such fantasies. After all, he doesn't always know what the best thing for me is, especially in situations where I'm overwhelmed or depressed. In the situation I described in the beginning of this post, what if I was actually too sick to ride in the rain, and I'd ended up in bed with a bad cold for the next three days? Or what if I had gotten to the show and was feeling so anxious in the crowd that I had to immediately go home again? What would that do to the trust that's so crucial to not only our D/s, but to our relationship?

## Some Thoughts on Family

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/12/26/some-thoughts-on-family/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/12/26/some-thoughts-on-family/)>

**Date:** December 26, 2007

**Category:** Communication and Consent, Relationships

**Topics:** anti-psychiatry, family

This is a little off topic here, and I have about ten other posts I really want to write — none of them easy — but I think I have to get some of this out before I can even touch any of the other stuff.

I had an incredibly shitty weekend, which peaked yesterday with a day of crying and shaking and feeling close to falling apart. I had been trying to push everything away, to have a good time with friends and hide my feelings from family. Of course, that never really works.

One of my aunts, one of the few people in my family I'd actually like to know better, recently put herself in the hospital because she was so depressed. "There's nothing you can do about this," my mother told me. "She doesn't want to talk about it." She had obviously been anticipating that I'd want to argue with her about it. On Friday evening, not two minutes after arriving at my parents' house, my mother told me that my aunt had tried to kill herself, had been put back in the hospital, and was going to be receiving electroshock. (Again, prefacing this with a reminder that there was nothing I could do, and that she didn't want to talk to anyone.) My mother also told me that when my aunt had woken up in the hospital, the first words she'd said were "I hate mom."

"Clearly," my mother said, "she isn't feeling herself."

This, from the woman who's told me the most horrific stories about the abuse she and her younger siblings endured from her mother. This, from the woman who had to essentially raise her sisters when her mother was "too busy" to bother feeding or bathing them. And, worst of all, from the woman who's still suffering memory problems from the long periods of electroshock she was put through herself.

I understand that some people reading this may have gone through the psychiatric system and feel that they have benefited from drugs and treatments like electroshock. But if I haven't made it clear in my earlier writings, I am pretty firmly opposed to psychiatry in general and electroshock in particular, in part because of my own experiences in that system and because of having watched my mother disintegrate under the effects of electroshock, losing her memory, becoming an invalid, incapable of working or doing anything other than watch television.

At the time, I wrote her a long letter about why I felt she should stop electroshock. We talked about it, a little, but I was so afraid of hurting her feelings that I let it go, because she seemed to feel that she had no other choice — and I didn't really have another one to give her. Years later, she found the letter again, read it, and found that she had no memory of its contents or our conversation. We talked about it again, and she admitted that she'd had strong reservations, that she'd tried to ask questions of her doctor, but had only been able to do so while they were strapping her down and injecting her with sedatives. She said that she felt like a cow being led to slaughter. And yet, she refuses to do anything about it, and hasn't ever spoken to me about it again. And now, her younger sister is in that cattle line, and she tells me this as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

My reaction, as it always is, was to nod and ask a few minor questions, but not to bring up any opposition or show any sign of distress. Instead, I made excuses to leave early, to escape.

I did not go with my parents to visit my extended family for Christmas, and turned down an invitation to have a smaller family gathering next weekend, closer to home. This is something I've been struggling with for over a decade, but last weekend's events have brought everything into clearer focus, and I'm beginning to finally loosen the bonds of family, bonds tied not out of love but of obligation and guilt.

When I was about thirteen, I started to realize that I didn't feel a very strong connection to anyone in my family, my parents included. This began to hit me especially hard during Christmas, a holiday I felt forced to pretend I cared about, and during which I was expected to enjoy the company of extended family — people I only saw once a year, at most, and whom I'd never had a real conversation with. I never understood how I was supposed to form any sort of bond with people I barely knew, how I was supposed to love and care about them simply because of a blood relation. And while I lived with both of my parents until I was sixteen, I felt alienated and distant from them as well, largely because our family culture was so steeped in avoiding and hiding problems, lying to each other, keeping secrets. When I *was* let in on some family drama or secret, it was always incredibly awkward and formal, and



always with a tone of “I don’t expect you to do anything about this or talk to this person, but you should probably know.”

(See above.)

The events of this past weekend really tied everything together for me, and I realized just how much I didn’t want to be part of my family any longer. It isn’t just that I have little existing connection to them, but that I have no desire to be part of a family in which the acceptable way to deal with problems is not to talk about them, but to deal with them privately and out of sight of the rest of the family; not to get out of bad situations or prioritize one’s own needs, but to do what is necessary to make the family comfortable. My aunt, for example, is in a long-term relationship with a woman who loves her, but who has coerced her into having one child with her already and is now trying for a second, while my aunt is very uncomfortable with being a parent at all. My mom has stayed with my dad despite the fact that he hasn’t supported her through her own depression and has largely ignored it or treated it as an illness to be medicated away.

To me, the only value that “family” offers is as a support structure: economically, emotionally, and socially. I’ve certainly enjoyed the financial component, especially while in school and in the promise of a future inheritance, but have never felt comfortable in being open with my immediate or extended family, and have largely felt that how I feel doesn’t matter, when it comes to how my family works. And because most of my family members live fairly far away from me (and have little in common with me), the social component isn’t really there, either.

For most of my life, I’ve felt intensely guilty for my desires to break away from family, to say no, to do what I want to do rather than what I’m expected to do. Instead of following my instincts and desires — for example, to drop out of high school and to reject college, two things I still regret not doing — I simply went along with what my parents wanted, what would make them happy. Of course, I’ve always had some limits: I’ve known for many years that I’ll never get married or have a child, despite their intentions for me to “settle down” someday soon, as they did. But I spent many years trying to act “normal” and to hide the parts of myself that I knew they wouldn’t understand and that would make them uncomfortable. I felt so guilty for not loving my family enough, not feeling anything towards them, not being the good daughter and granddaughter and niece and cousin, that I forced myself to put on a show, to have pleasant, boring conversations on the phone once a week, to go to the family Christmas party, to keep my mouth shut when I felt angry about something going on or something said. I thought that all of this would make my mother, in particular, happy. And this would absolve me, this would at least do something to help me atone for the sin of not loving and respecting my elders. Did I mention that my family’s Catholic?

And now, I say, *fuck that*. Fuck guilt, and fuck obligation. Fuck feeling that I have to celebrate religious holidays that have absolutely no meaning for me, and fuck the fear that’s kept me from saying anything against the way my family deals with emotional problems.

Outwardly, this won’t change much. I’m not breaking away completely, or calling all my relatives to tell them what fuck-ups they are. But I am going to try to contact my aunt, despite what my mom tells me, and I will never again let them coerce me into doing anything I don’t want to do.

## Being Outed

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/12/07/being-outed/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/12/07/being-outed/)>

**Date:** December 7, 2007

**Category:** Coming Out

**Topics:** anonymity, blogging, Coming Out, community

Another kinky blogger, a woman I have a great deal of respect for, recently set all her entries to “private” after a horrible experience with a loved one finding her blog and having a less than positive reaction to it. She’s been posting a little bit, now, about her experiences in dealing with this, and her

thought process in deciding what to do. Subsequently, I've been thinking a lot about the implications of my own blog on my life, about the anonymity of my writing and of the communications I've had with other bloggers, about the absolute terror that surrounds being outed, and about the very real possibility that someday, someone I don't want to read this blog will read this blog.

In fact, it's *such* a possibility that I'm a little astonished I hadn't really given it much thought before now. I'm not too worried that a family member, for example, could connect all of this back to me, but it's quite possible that someone in my extended circle could deduce that this was me, based on some things I've written here: I have openly identified myself as a vegan anarchist living in the San Francisco Bay Area, for example. There are a few other clues I won't spell out here, but suffice to say that a close friend could easily reach this blog within a few clicks of anything I've written publicly, under my real name.

I guess there are actually three things that I'm trying to write about, here. The first is *why* this blog is anonymous in the first place. The second is what I think I'd do if I was outed to someone who reacted negatively, whether a friend, family member, or professional contact. The third is why taking down my blog would not be on my list of options.

It seems pretty easy, on the surface, to see why all of this stuff should be kept anonymous. Even if I were completely comfortable with my friends and family knowing that I was kinky, I suspect that this blog might have negative repercussions for my professional life. Perhaps not; or perhaps not *now*. But once you're out, you're out—no going back—and I'm not sure if I want to forever have anything I've written or worked on associated with BDSM. (And I know that's what would happen; I could write a book on brine shrimp, and somewhere along the line, some review or interview would mention my perversions and somehow tie that into questioning my credibility as a writer.)

So my name remains hidden, at least, and overt links to my professional life are nowhere to be found on this blog. But if, by some chance, I was put in the uncomfortable position of having to defend myself against an attack on my sexuality, and this blog was part of the conversation, I'd have some choices to make.

In all likelihood, I would immediately take down my blog. I would probably be tempted to simply delete everything I'd written, but in the end would find myself unable to just throw away a few years of intensely personal writings about an incredibly important part of my life. In the case of a nasty fallout with a family member or friend, I would probably find myself in a dark pit of self-doubt and -hatred, and would need a lot of support to remember that no, I'm not a bad person and no, I'm not twisted or broken. The blog would go to "private," though I might allow a few blogging friends to have access to the posts. I would probably spend the next week writing *The Great Defense of BDSM* to present to the judgmental person in question, an essay that would undoubtedly cause them to rethink everything they thought they knew about sexuality, individual freedom, and feminism. I would spend the following week tearing up large portions of it and wondering whether I should even bother, now, and wouldn't it just be easier to forget the whole thing. I'm honestly not sure whether or not I'd be brave enough, in the end, to confront the person in question and argue my case.

The blog probably would stay down for some time, but most likely, I wouldn't be able to stop writing completely, because writing—and knowing that there are others out there who can resonate with it in some way—is a lifeline for me at times, and is often the only way I can begin to express what I'm feeling, problems I've been facing, dilemmas, fears, successes, excitement, joy. Perhaps it's different when you're so involved in a community of like-minded folk (and I'm reminded of Maymay's post on the importance of such), but for me writing publicly (though anonymously) has become one of the only outlets I have for talking about my sexuality.

The point of this is to say that writing on this blog, while anonymous, is also a way for me to enjoy the positive aspects of being out, while pretty much eliminating all of the negative ones. For the most part, I feel I can openly discuss my sex life, my fantasies and desires, and my fears without worrying about being misunderstood or judged. But I don't think it's completely possible to continue to enjoy those benefits without ever having to deal with the drawbacks, and at some point, there's a choice that

has to be made. And if and when I am faced with that choice, I think I'd probably keep on writing, and do whatever I had to do in my social and professional life to adjust to that.

A year ago, I wouldn't have even considered that. I have the circle of writers like the woman I mentioned at the beginning of this post to thank for that.

## Just Another Day

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/12/01/just-another-day/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/12/01/just-another-day/)>

**Date:** December 1, 2007

**Category:** Smut

**Topics:** breath play, D/s, kicking, spanking

NOTE: This post contains explicit sexual imagery and descriptions of BDSM play.

I'm sick with a chest cold, and exhausted, and stressed out by the job I just started two weeks ago, and I've been having a really hard time making space for the more enjoyable activities in my life, say, sex and writing. Now I have about six different entries I want to write on here, but they're all rather complicated. Instead, I think I'd just like to write about the lovely evening I had last night.

We were cuddled up on the couch together when he suddenly started pinching my sides—often a good gauge of whether or not I'm interested in playing. I didn't move away, but let him twist the flesh, digging his nails in. My breath came faster, and I must have let out a sigh. He moved my hand to his pants; he was hard already. He unzipped them with one hand, the other remaining firmly attached to my side, and placed my hand on his cock. I stroked it until he released me, telling me to go down on him.

For a minute, I felt that all I wanted to do for the rest of my life was to suck his cock, feeling him filling my mouth, his hips pushing forward so that he reached my throat. But he eventually pulled me off, and unbuckled my belt, pulling it out from the loops on my pants. "Go to my room," he said. "Wait there for me."

I waited in his room, standing, still fully clothed. He came in with the belt in his hands. "Bend over the bed." I put my palms on the bed and bent over, keeping my head up. He undid my pants and pulled them down, loosely bunched around my shoes. He took his time sliding my underwear down, caressing my ass softly.

He didn't tell me before striking the first blow, but I had, of course, already been anticipating it. He thrashed my legs and ass with the belt for a minute, but suddenly decided he wanted to fuck me, throwing the belt casually on the bed as he unzipped his own pants and roughly thrust into me. He pushed me forward, forcing me to crawl further onto the bed, on hands and knees. He picked the belt back up, and pulled it around my throat, looping it through the buckle and pulling it until it was slightly choking me. He slowed his rhythm for a minute, and said, "take a deep breath." I breathed in, and he tightened his grip as he thrust even harder into me. "Breathe out," he said, releasing the belt-leash slightly, and I exhaled.

He continued with the belt around my neck for a while, but then abruptly removed it. I whimpered, a little. "I don't want to leave any marks on your neck," he explained. I nodded. We were meeting with friends later in the evening.

He studied me for a minute. "Lift your arms." I did, and he pulled my shirt over my head, but left my arms in the armholes. The fabric stretched taut against my neck, and a slight tug against it made it very difficult to breathe. He let go, and leaned in close to me. "If you begin to feel faint, or want to stop for any reason, I want you to do this." He pounded a fist into the mattress, twice. "Do you understand?"

"Yes," I said.

"Good. Now take a deep breath." He waited for me to inhale, then tightened the shirt. A moment later, I felt the belt on my ass again, harder. He had never restricted my breathing in combination with a spanking; each blow felt more intense, yet easier to endure. He stopped to allow me to breath normally,

and then started up again. The third time, I began to see stars, and signalled. He immediately stopped, loosened my shirt, and placed the belt gently across my back. “Good,” he said, stroking my head. He moved to the edge of the bed to take his boots off. “I want you on the floor, in a minute,” he said as he untied the laces. “Do you want to be on the ground in front of me?”

He knew that it was a rhetorical question, of course. “Yes,” I answered.

“Get down there. Now.” I scrambled to the foot of the bed and crawled onto the floor. “Face down, facing me,” he said. I obeyed. I felt his cold foot on my back, and shivered. “Cold, isn’t it,” he said. He placed the other one against my side, warming his feet on my skin. He stood up on the floor, and stepped over to one side of me. “I’m going to kick you,” he said, “and then I’m going to fuck you some more. Then I’m going to jerk off, and you’re going to take me in your mouth when I come. Do you understand?” I told him I did. “Good.” He kicked me with the side of his foot, lightly, then a little harder with the other foot. The blows of his foot hard into my ass cheeks felt entirely unlike being spanked; this felt heavier, in some ways, but not as painful. Every blow felt *good*, like being fucked. I suddenly had an image of what I must look like to him, my half-naked body with pants roughly pushed down and shirt hanging off my neck, face down on the floor. The world melted away, and I lost myself within the sensation of being kicked, again and again. I knew that in a few minutes, he would come, and then he would allow me to come, and we would cuddle next to each other in bed, warm and happy and content. But right now I was cold and alone on the ground, under his cruel foot, and there was nowhere else I would rather be.

## Piercings

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/11/18/piercings/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/11/18/piercings/)>

**Date:** November 18, 2007

**Category:** Body Mods

**Topics:** piercings, self-confidence

Two or three years ago, I considered my nipples to be extremely sensitive, and didn’t particularly like having them played with. Yesterday, I planned to celebrate my last day of work at the most boring job I’ve ever had by getting them pierced.

But then, a few hours before I was supposed to meet up with my partner and head over to the shop, I began to have second thoughts. Part of it was the cold feet that I get before piercings (except the ones I’ve done on myself — something to do with a stranger doing something to me I consider relatively intimate), but most of it was realizing that I hadn’t really thought through the short and long-term effects this would be bringing to my life.

In the short term, as far as I know from teh interwebs, it would mean that I would have to be extremely careful with them, both from getting pulled on and from infection. Obviously, it would mean that my partner couldn’t pinch, twist, or suck on them (and forget about the clamps), and it would also mean that sex in general would have to be a lot less rough-and-tumble. That alone is a major bummer, considering that the average healing time is 4-6 months. (I have very sensitive skin, and have had longer-than-average healing times for earlobe piercings and stretchings, so I suspect it could be a year or longer before nipple piercings would be fully healed on me.) In a more mundane sense, it would mean being a lot more careful in general about physical activity and cleanliness, making sure to wash my shirts and towels frequently, avoid hot tubs (again, major bummer), and possibly curtail my involvement with a self-defense / martial arts collective I’ve been wanting to increase my activity in.

In the long term, if everything goes right and I don’t get an infection and I don’t reject the jewelry, I’ll have two piercings that are personally very aesthetically pleasing, and something fun to play with and tug on. Theoretically, my nipples will be more sensitive, and may stick out more — which could be good or bad. I worry a bit that the increased sensitivity will make it too uncomfortable to go bra-less (as I generally do), or that the jewelry will be obnoxious and irritating, especially when it’s cold. I also

wonder about what kind of abuse they'll be able to take even after they've healed, and if it's the sort of thing I'll have to be constantly vigilant about, lest they get infected, the jewelry migrates, etc.

[Exhales.] So them's all my worries. I still have a strong desire to get them done, for a lot of positive reasons. Symbolically, they're definitely appealing, as a signifier of just how far I've opened up, sexually, in the past few years — and I don't just mean as a submissive or bottom or masochist, but as a person comfortable with her sexuality, who finally sees her body as sexy and desirable, including the breasts I always thought were too small to be attractive. I also like the idea of having a constant physical reminder of that, something to focus on or turn my mind to when I'm feeling depressed or anxious.

At any rate, I would love to hear from anyone who is more knowledgeable or experienced in this area than I am...are my concerns here valid? (And yes, I know — ask the damn piercer. I plan to. But it's always a lot easier for me to get everything out in writing, first.)

## Porn = Violent Sex = Bad

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/11/16/porn-violent-sex-bad/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/11/16/porn-violent-sex-bad/)>

**Date:** November 16, 2007

**Category:** BDSM in the Media

**Topics:** bdsm & psychology, media criticism, porn

I've read my fair share of articles posing the question, "is pornography harmful?" And I've come to expect that most of the time, "pornography" means erotic video or photographic imagery aimed at a heterosexual male audience, usually involving "degrading" or "violent" sexual acts. I've come to expect that this definition is never given, but rather assumed, and that there will be little or no mention of queer porn, alternative / independent porn, or dominant-woman porn. If there is a discussion of porn featuring a dominant woman, it will refer to her as a "dominatrix" and dismiss her as the product of neurotic male fantasy.

I've come to expect that the article will talk about how porn is simultaneously becoming more mainstream and more "degrading," more cruel. There will be no statistics or background given to prove this statement, nor will there be any definition given of what constitutes "degrading" sexual behavior or an acknowledgment that sexual acts can be interpreted in different ways. The exception to this rule is a specific discussion of the mainstreaming of anal sex in porn, which is assumed to be innately degrading and harmful to women (and something that only ever happens with a woman as the receiver, not the giver).

I've come to expect that these articles will scoff at the free will of the women who engage in sex work of any kind, whether as a porn actor, stripper, or prostitute. They will degrade and demean those women they argue are being degraded and demeaned by their chosen line of work. The authors will not bother to interview sex workers, or research statistics on how sex workers feel about their work and their relative freedom and safety.

I've also come to expect that there will certainly be no attention given to BDSM, or any indication that a woman could actually enjoy rough sex, bondage, slapping, spanking, and the like. (And again, there will be no mention of the fact that many men enjoy the same.) The article may give some reassurance that not all men who like porn hate women, but will mention that some do get off on the actual suffering and pain experienced by a woman, and will psychologize this away as the result of a troubled childhood and a sick mind, and will warn that such men are often rapists or misogynistic psychopaths. There will be no mention of women sadists, nor any discussion of what the term "sadist" and "masochist" mean in a consensual BDSM context.

Sigh.

## The Piano Teacher

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/11/14/the-piano-teacher/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/11/14/the-piano-teacher/)>

**Date:** November 14, 2007

**Category:** BDSM in the Media

**Topics:** media criticism, role confusion, The Piano Teacher

I just finished watching *La Pianiste*, and I am so utterly confused about what I think of this movie. The first half of the film is riveting, and the first sex scene between Isabelle Huppert's character, Erika, and her student, Walter, is incredibly hot — she jerks him off in a bathroom, but refuses to allow him to touch her, and instructs him repeatedly to *face me, take it out, don't turn away from me, don't make a sound*, and finally, denies him climax, telling him that if he touches himself, she'll never come back. He complains and groans, pleads and calls her "bitch," but still obeys her every instruction. Did I mention that halfway through, she stops and opens the bathroom door, and stares him down with the challenge: *do you dare? I do*.

I got chills.

But then, her character unravels. The delicious cruelty turns out to be an inability to relate to anyone in a remotely human way; her strict discipline and testing of her suitor turns out to not be sexual play, but social ineptitude — she just doesn't know how to do anything but instruct and give orders. Or perhaps she's just playing with him as she wants to be played with. Because as it turns out, her deeper sexual fantasies involve submission and being overpowered — being bound, gagged, and beaten — and it's unclear whether or not she's ever expressed them to anyone before, let alone played them out with another person. She writes her student a long and incredibly detailed letter about what she'd like to do with him: her requests are so specific, so precise, that they almost come across as a list of demands. Walter, sadly, is disgusted by her fantasies, and rejects her.

He's also angry with her, rightfully so, for having first scorned and spurned him repeatedly, then leading him on with hot bathroom sex, then abruptly stopping and refusing to have anything to do with him unless it's within the carefully dictated parameters of her sexual fantasies. Then, rejected by him once already, she goes to him and begs for forgiveness, then seduces him, but seconds after beginning to go down on him, she gags on his cock and vomits, which makes him feel even more rejected. "It's never made a woman puke before," he says. That night, he shows up at her place late at night, and whether out of revenge, frustration, or an honest attempt to make a last effort at actually pleasing her, rapes her, while saying repeatedly, "this is what you wanted, right? Is this how you imagined it?"

There are a lot of ways to interpret this scene — is it just another media portrayal of BDSM as something inherently harmful? Are we supposed to think that her fantasies were somehow "too much" for her, that she didn't *really* want to be bound and beaten? Or are viewers supposed to understand that she only wanted to play out her fantasies in a safe and controlled environment, and for him to hit her out of love, not frustration and rage? Is the average person watching this movie going to come away from it thinking "it's sad how incapable she was of communicating what she wanted in a reasonable way, and how judgmental he was of her desires"? Or are they going to think, "she was deeply disturbed and obviously had a pathological sexuality, and it's sad that she thought she wanted to be raped, because obviously she didn't want that at all"?

Rrrrgh. I'm both fascinated and frustrated by the inscrutability of this movie and her character...I may have to go read the book, now.

## ...and Back Again.

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/11/10/and-back-again/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/11/10/and-back-again/)>

**Date:** November 10, 2007

**Category:** D/s, Relationships

Only a few days have passed since I last wrote, and so much has changed. I have lovely welts and bite marks on my sides and back and shoulders, and I feel so happy and excited that you might almost classify me as “giddy.”

Yeah, things are good again.

## Down Time

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/11/05/down-time/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/11/05/down-time/)>

**Date:** November 5, 2007

**Category:** D/s, Relationships

Before getting into a relationship with my current partner, I’d never had a lover who identified as a dom. I’d played some, with others, at things like light bondage — the usual stuff couples “try out” here and there. But the occasions were frustratingly few and far between, and it was a thrilling revelation when I discovered that with him, *I could have that every day*. Okay, almost every day.

Back in the beginning (and naturally, in the first bit of time before we’d had “the talk”) we still had relatively vanilla sex on a regular basis, which we both enjoyed. But it sort of got phased out of our lives, replaced by — well, even more enjoyable sex. Two years later, we’ve gotten to the point where pretty much every sexual encounter we have involves us dipping into our respective dom/sub minds; even when we’re not exactly constructing a scene, our sex is always informed by a D/S dynamic.

And in general, that’s just peachy. A good 95% of the time, that’s exactly what I want, too.

It’s that 5% that’s been bothering me. It’s the nights when the same thing we did two weeks ago not only fails to arouse me, but irritates me. It’s the nights when I have zero interest in any kind of sex at all. And it’s also the nights when I find myself wanting to just climb on top of him and fuck him until I come.

I’ve done that, before — suddenly taken charge, determined to get exactly what I want, whether or not he likes it. It isn’t evidence of some sort of latent switchiness in my kink; it isn’t dominance, which *is* concerned with how the other person is feeling and reacting, but just selfishness. And no matter how amazing the resulting orgasms are, I’m always left feeling ashamed and unsatisfied, as if everything had been thrown off balance. And he’s always left feeling strange and unaroused, because the me-on-top thing is (or has become) completely uninteresting to him, both physically and symbolically. And then, of course, this string of thoughts: *Why do I feel guilty when I fuck you? Why has something that was once at least somewhat pleasurable for you become something that leaves you so cold? Is something wrong?*

Of course, those last two thoughts apply to me as well, in those times when I suddenly can’t get aroused by dominance and pain, those times when his hands pulling my hair and pushing me down leave me cold, or bothered. I think both “What’s wrong with *me*, that I’m suddenly so vanilla?” and, simultaneously, “What’s wrong with *you*, that you can’t enjoy just fucking me, without any of the D/S?”

And of course, there’s nothing *wrong* with either of us. I know that. There’s nothing wrong with him because he can’t turn off his dominance. There’s nothing wrong with me because I sometimes lose my submissiveness. And usually, it’s due to some external stresses in my life, and once I’m calmer and more relaxed, it all goes back to normal. (I know this almost instinctively, but it also helps when there are other very insightful kinky bloggers out there who’ve documented their experiences with the same thing. These posts by Eileen and Maymay, [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) have been helping me out a lot.)

I do worry, sometimes, that I’ll wake up one day and discover that I’m honestly no longer interested in submission and pain, that my kink switch has just been flipped off permanently — or that the neighboring adjustment knob has been turned to “dominant” — and then that’ll pretty much be it for our relationship. Not that our relationship is built entirely around our sex life, but more that it’d be a difficult change to weather. And I know that’s a very silly fear to harbor (I haven’t ever experienced

this sort of down time for significantly long periods of time; there's plenty that we love about each other outside of sex), but it does creep in now and then.

## Closet Kink.

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/10/10/closet-kink/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/10/10/closet-kink/)>

**Date:** October 10, 2007

**Category:** Coming Out

**Topics:** Coming Out, vanilla folk

I've been wanting to write a longer post about my fears around being "found out" and my ongoing terror that surfaces any time a friend mentions sadomasochism or bondage or anything of the sort. About how I really wish there was some sort of handbook for coming out as kinky, how to respond to friends and strangers who make comments about BDSM being gross and weird.

But I'm not really sure there's much more I can write, beyond "I wish" and "I don't know." Part of me feels like it's something I need to challenge, constantly, to be assertive and open about my sexuality, and that every time I keep silent when someone makes a joke about masochists, I lose. Part of me feels like I should just not let it bother me so much, that I don't have to be a BDSM spokesperson, and that I should just remind myself that these people don't know what the fuck they're talking about.

Sometimes I feel like writing a "just so you know" email to all my friends, or posting on my more public blog or hell, putting a flyer on my bedroom door. I'm tired of feeling like there's this big secret part of my life that my friends can't know about, but I also don't feel like there's any good way to bring it up, or even really a reason to, aside from those rare occasions when a friend makes some uninformed comment about BDSM and hurts my feelings. I've never really talked to most of my friends about sex, to begin with — so suddenly talking to them about my kinky side would feel very strange. And maybe I don't need to, or at least not to everyone. But I do hate this feeling of hiding, the fear of being found out, and the fear of rejection.

## Folsom Street Reflections

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/10/04/folsom-street-reflections/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/10/04/folsom-street-reflections/)>

**Date:** October 4, 2007

**Category:** Public Play, The Scene

**Topics:** Folsom Street Fair, perversion, playing with others, Public Play, vanilla folk

Last Sunday was my fourth Folsom Street Fair, but only my second as a semi-out submissive, and my first as a submissive who's had a glimpse into the larger BDSM world. Or at least, the part of that world I can sort of identify with.

The fair is largely directed at a gay male audience, which makes sense — that's how it began, and that's the general constituency of the neighborhood where it takes place, in a portion of the SOMA district that might as well be known as LeatherDaddy Town. Unfortunately for a het girl like myself, that means there's not a whole lot of booths offering anything I'm interested in. And because my partner and I are both vegan, I certainly wasn't expecting that we'd be walking away from the fair with a brand new cruelty-free (hah!) faux leather whip.

But those aren't really complaints — like I said, it was to be expected. What I hadn't counted on was how overwhelmingly crowded it would be; every year it seems to be even more packed than the year before. What's more, every year I notice more and more obvious "tourists," people who attend the fair to gawk and point at the freaks. I'm not talking about people who aren't in fetish gear or who aren't marked in some way as kinky. (Hell, I wasn't wearing my collar, and my beat-up sneakers and dirty Carhartts didn't exactly scream "submissive.") I'm talking about people who *actually* point and stare,



people who somehow feel that it's okay for them to talk loudly about how crazy this is and how "too extreme" or "just too much" that is. Listening to that sort of dialogue permeating the fair made me feel even less "safe" than usual about being a submissive, about being one of those perverts — when the fair should be, I thought, a place where I could feel comfortable.

But maybe it's not. Maybe it's a place for exhibitionists, and for people who gladly wave their freak flag, who flaunt their sexuality as perversion, who dress up in fetish gear and wear their collars and leashes and don't seem to mind when people ask to take their pictures.

(Maybe I'm just jealous.)

At any rate, we did find one point of interest: the Society of Janus charity booth, where a small donation got you a good spanking or flogging. The excellent tops, many of whom were professionals, were fantastic to watch. One of them, a man who had just finished a truly beautiful dual-flogger session, came over to us. Looking me in the eyes, he said, "like to give it a try?" "I can't," I stuttered, not knowing exactly what to say. I couldn't say that the idea wasn't appealing, but my partner and I hadn't yet found a situation where we'd both be comfortable playing with a third party. The man looked at my partner. "How about you, then?" "I don't bottom," he said immediately, and the man laughed. "Well, okay then!" he said, and walked over to another woman just entering the booth. Later, he was taking a turn on the microphone to call for donations, and looked to me and my partner. "You can donate even if you don't want a spanking. Come on, man. If you won't let me beat on your woman, at least donate a few bucks." My partner laughed, and handed over a few dollars. He turned to me. "It's worth it just to watch him some more." But after a few minutes, he asked, "would you want to go in there?"

I was taken aback. The last time we'd discussed playing with anyone else, he was extremely reluctant, and wasn't sure if he could handle seeing or knowing about me bottoming to someone else. "You'd be okay with that?"

"I think so," he said. "I mean, it's a very controlled environment. And it isn't...it seems less intimate. You'd sort of be bottoming, not submitting."

"I don't know," I said. "Part of me thinks, 'yes, definitely, I would love to,' but I think I might be too...shy." Up until the moment he asked, I had thought that given the opportunity, I wouldn't hesitate to get in the booth; but once it became something real, something I could indeed do, right now, I was feeling something like stage fright. And the fact that the flogging sessions were being photographed by dozens of anonymous people in the crowd didn't make me feel any more comfortable with the idea. We left after a while, and I felt a little let down. And as we got on the BART to head home, I kept thinking, "I should have....I should have."

Of course, the feelings of regret dissipated with the first stroke of our new flogger, at home, and the ones to follow eliminated any other worries I'd built up over the day...

## New Toys = Fun.

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/09/28/new-toys-fun/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/09/28/new-toys-fun/)>

**Date:** September 28, 2007

**Category:** Smut

**Topics:** anal, collars, D/s, flogger, orgasm control, posture collar, vegan bdsm, vegan collar, vegan erotica

NOTE: This post contains explicit sexual imagery and descriptions of BDSM play.

"What's that?" he asked, as I pulled a heap of clothes out of my backpack.

"Just some stuff I got for free at this clothing swap," I said, throwing them into the laundry basket. "I didn't try on all of it," I added, pulling on a sweater.

"That looks nice."

"Thanks." I took it off and tried on a thin dress I had picked up on a whim — I couldn't remember the last time I'd actually worn a dress. "What about this?" I started to ask, when I felt his arm around my waist and his hand on the back of my neck.

"I think this new collar would look nice on you, too," he said softly, and fastened it around my neck. The collar enveloped my entire neck, and was stiff at the top and bottom, forcing my head into an upright position. It had been advertised as a "posture collar," and I quickly realized how accurate the label was. He secured the back of the collar and turned me around. He smiled with approval, and pulled the straps of my dress down to hang loosely around my shoulders. Hooking his finger into the large o-ring on the front of the collar, he pulled me forward to kiss him, biting my lip sharply. His other hand felt around my waist and down to my ass, where he tugged at the hem of the dress.

"Pull down your underwear," he said suddenly. It was in that moment that I felt everything shift, slightly — the collar felt nice, but I hadn't truly felt myself entering my submissive mind until that moment, until the order that I quickly obeyed. "Turn towards the bed and bend over." I obliged, and he felt my ass lightly with one hand. I knew he wouldn't spank me, tonight; there were roommates home, just on the other side of a thin wall. Instead, he opened the drawer of my nightstand and pulled out our other new toy: a cat-o-nine tails flogger, with silver talons woven into the top of the handle.

Our eyes met, and he must have noticed my concern. "I know this will make too much noise to hit you with. I'm not going to make any noise. Not tonight." I nodded, and put my head down. He stood behind me, and pulled up my dress.

The flogger tails lightly grazed my skin, and I shuddered. He swung it again, so that just the tips of the tails struck my back, and laughed. "I think I'll enjoy this," he said, more to himself than to me. I suddenly felt the flogger between my legs, as he dragged the long tails up against my cunt, teasing me. I squirmed, and he put a hand on my back to still me.

"On your knees," he said, and I dropped to the ground. He stood in front of me, and held out the flogger. "Kiss it," he said. "Lick it." I hungrily kissed and licked the tails and handle of the flogger, and seeing my eagerness, he pressed the handle further into my mouth. "Suck it." With one hand, he unzipped his pants. "Take out my cock." I felt his hardness swelling against the fabric, and took his cock out, without unbuttoning the fly. I stroked him and, anticipating his next request, took him into my mouth, pushing my head down until I gagged. He pet my head lightly, then grabbed my hair and pulled.

"Stand up," he said. "Lay down on the bed. Face down." As I lay down, he pushed up my dress so that it bunched loosely around my chest, and straddled my back. He leaned forward, and, pushing my hair back from my ear, whispered, "I'm going to hurt you now. Would you like that?"

"Yes," I said, "I'd like that." A second later, I felt something sharp pressing into my thigh, and buried my face in a pillow to keep from crying out too loudly. I realized it was one of the talons adorning the flogger, and was surprised at how sharp it was. With a slight movement, I thought, it would cut me open. He slowly lifted the flogger up, and again cut into my thigh with the talons. I gasped as he pressed in deeper, feeling the sharp point threatening to open up my skin. With his other hand, he circled my cunt and then inserted a finger, driving into me quickly once, then again, then again. I gasped, and pressed back against him. He removed his finger.

A few seconds later, I felt a cold sensation, and recognized it as the ring dangling from the end of the flogger's handle. Without saying a word, he pressed harder, and began fucking me with the flogger handle, faster, deeper, and then yanked it out only to press it up against my face.

"You've made it all dirty," he said in a low voice. "Clean it off." I began licking the handle of the flogger, slightly repulsed by the bitter taste of the steel ring. "Good," he murmured. "Good girl." I heard him unbuckle his belt, and felt his cock pressing up against me. The flogger still in my mouth, he entered me and began to fuck me quickly, deeply, as he thrust the flogger in time.

His breath became quicker, and he put the flogger down on the pillow next to me, pressing both his hands against my ass as he thrust into me.

"You're mine," he said. "Every part of you is mine."

“Yes.”

“I want to fuck you in the ass.”

“Yes. Please,” I said.

“Beg for it.”

“Please fuck me in the ass.” He suddenly pulled out of me and, guiding his cock with one hand, shoved it roughly into my ass. I gasped; it was sudden, but I had been ready for it, and pressed back up against him, driving him even deeper in.

“Yes,” he said in a low voice. “God, you feel good. Do you want me to come in you?”

“Yes, please,” I begged him. He leaned close to my ear, not slowing his pace.

“You’re going to be sore tomorrow. I want you to be sore tomorrow, to remember me.” He grabbed a fistful of my hair. “I’m coming,” he said, pulling my hair so tightly I thought he might rip some of it out. He released it almost immediately, and breathing hard, fell onto his elbows, his stomach flat against my back. It was only seconds later that he ordered me to play with myself, not moving from his position on top of me. “I want to feel you come,” he said. I sighed heavily as my fingers reached my clit. I pushed myself back against his cock, still hard, still deep in my ass.

“You have thirty seconds,” he said suddenly. “You are going to come in thirty seconds.” I began to count down, and felt the tension building. “Ten seconds,” he said in a low voice, his hand on the back of my collar. “One,” he said, and paused. “Come.” I nearly cried out as I came, hard, on his command.

It was probably several minutes before either one of us moved.

## Going Nonverbal

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/09/07/going-nonverbal/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/09/07/going-nonverbal/)>

**Date:** September 7, 2007

**Category:** BDSM & Psych, Communication and Consent

**Topics:** bdsm & psychology, communication, consent, limit

I’ve only recently become aware that “going nonverbal” is not an uncommon experience for submissives. (See Dw3t-Hthr’s post here, and a paper she references on the origin of “Safe Sane Consensual,” here.)

This was something of a revelation, for me — the notion that what I experience when I get deeply submissive, or after I’ve been given a lot of pain, is something that other people feel, too. It’s funny, now, that it hadn’t even occurred to me before.

That sensation is a particularly significant and personal one for me, because it’s something I began experiencing long before I understood what BDSM was. It’s something I began feeling when I was fourteen or fifteen, the first time I had an attack of overwhelm (or whatever you want to call it; never really been “diagnosed” as such), and found that I was completely incapable of speaking to people while in that state. Since then, I’ve had attacks with a lover present, and each time it happens, the most difficult thing for both of us is my inability to communicate verbally, to talk to him. It’s terrifying. And it’s what I was the most afraid of, after my first few experiences really going into subspace. It’s only today that I realized the feeling was the same one, and understood why I was so scared, early on, of being too far gone, too deep.

For me, “going nonverbal” isn’t just about an inability to speak, but is tied to a state in which I honestly cannot make decisions for myself, and in which any question directed at me, and especially any question about what I do or do not want to do, makes my head spin and go into a panic. And this is equally true for D/s play as it is for my attacks of overwhelm or bouts of depression. When I’m forced to speak, to answer a question or make a decision for myself, I begin to worry about upsetting my partner. And *that*, of course, makes me anxious, which drives me even deeper into nonverbal territory.

I never thought about the idea that maybe, such mental states aren’t a *bad* thing, something to fight or overcome, but are simply a way of being that requires a little more care and preparation.

I would really love to find out how other subs deal with this situation — Dw3t-Hthr writes that her communication is simply physical rather than verbal, in a series of coded gestures that they've worked out beforehand. Which sounds like it would be an excellent thing for me and my partner to start implementing, though the issue for me isn't simply not being able to speak, but not being able to make decisions in the moment, not being able to truly consent. I guess the emphasis should be on the "beforehand" — if I know that I might potentially reach a state where I cannot speak and will find it difficult to safeword, object to an awkward position, or ask for a moment to breathe or drink water, my partner needs to know that beforehand, so that he can better watch out for me. I think that really gets at the root of the "loving" aspect of BDSM, the trust I have that if he does bring me to that dark place, he'll be able to care for me while I'm there.

## She Couldn't Possibly...

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/09/06/she-couldnt-possibly/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/09/06/she-couldnt-possibly/)>

**Date:** September 6, 2007

**Category:** BDSM in the Media

**Topics:** Feminism, media criticism

If you've ever read a story about the death of a young, attractive, white woman, this will sound familiar.

*For 17-year-old Taylor Behl of Vienna, Va., happiness was sipping cappuccino and listening to live music at her favorite neighborhood coffee shop...."She was so excited about the future," [her mother] says. "The list of things that she wanted to do, and who she wanted to be. And she would have succeeded. She would have been all those things."*

She was beautiful, happy, loved life, her family, and friends. Yada yada yada. Pretty much the same description of every murder victim the media considers worthy of a feature story or a foundation in her name. But in this story on CNN (originally from January, but run again with updates last month), the victim is not only portrayed as all of the above, but also as a woman who was sexually naive, innocent, and even prudish. Why? Because her death was the result of asphyxiation during sex in the back of her car.

After reading the story, it's still pretty unclear what happened — the guy in question sounds sketchy as hell, and I wouldn't be surprised if he did, in fact, simply rape and murder the girl, as the prosecution contends. But that's not really the point, here. The point is that in order to make him culpable of her murder, investigators and the woman's family and friends had to focus on *her* complete innocence and sexual inexperience, insisting that this young woman couldn't possibly have been interested in the sort of sexual play the man now in prison insists she was into. And while I suppose it doesn't really hurt her, being dead and all, it's frustrating to see yet another story re-emphasizing the "good girls don't" message.

*This is how 38-year-old petty thief Ben Fawley claims 17-year-old college freshman Taylor Behl died: at her own game, a sex game known as "erotic asphyxia."*

*...Fawley claims, that at her urging during sex in the back seat of her car, he tried various ways to restrict Taylor's breathing. The prosecution's theory? Fawley took Taylor for a drive to a secluded area to have sex. When Taylor rejected him, an angry Fawley strangled her.*

*Prosecutors also say Fawley duct-taped Taylor's wrists — not as part of a sex act — but to restrain her. "Now that's not erotic asphyxiation, bondage, or any kind of sex in any of the textbooks that I've looked at," [prosecutor] Gill says.*

Sex textbooks, huh? And according to those "textbooks," binding someone's wrists behind their back with duct tape isn't bondage? Okay, maybe a poor choice of materials, but...

*"How would Taylor have any kind of knowledge about this bondage or any of these sexual practices?" Moriarty [the reporter] asks.*

*"Fawley showed her," Johnson [a defense attorney] says. "He had a computer that was filled with pictures of, you know, young ladies involved in various bondage poses."*

[Pounding head against wall.] Right. Because there's no way an eighteen-year-old woman would have fantasized about bondage or asphyxiation without an older man showing her porn. On the computer, no less!

*Taylor's best friend and confidant, Glynnis...says the defense theory is simply ridiculous. "I know for a fact that Taylor would never have done that. She would have never been into bondage. She was not a sexually experienced person," Glynnis explains. Glynnis says Taylor never talked about an interest in bondage, and that by 17-year-old standards, she was "a prude."*

*In fact, prosecutor Chris Bullard says he was unable to find any evidence, other than Fawley's word, that Taylor had any interest in bondage and risky sex acts. "There's no computer evidence to show that she was visiting Web sites about erotic asphyxiation," he explains.*

Right, because there's no reason why a young woman would be reluctant to come out to her friends about her kinky fantasies. And of course, there's no way she would have had any interest in this stuff unless she had, again, been visiting porn websites.

*What's more, prosecutors say they can prove that Fawley is lying about how Taylor died that night. By re-enacting Fawley's story, Richmond police showed 48 Hours what they learned. Officer Sarah Powell portrayed Taylor, while Jason McClellan of the Richmond Police Department played the role of Fawley. The two young officers are the same size as Taylor and Fawley, and the car used for the re-enactment was an exact replica. Det. Jason Hudson read from Fawley's own statement as a script. The two officers tried to physically follow the "script" as they were in the car. "I've only been here a few minutes and already half my body is completely numb," Officer Powell, who portrayed Taylor, remarked. "So I know that any teenage girl wouldn't settle for this too long." The obvious takeaway, say the officers? "Someone could not get any kind of enjoyment out of this," McClellan said.*

Sure, that makes sense — oh wait, it *doesn't at all*. By that logic, teenagers would *never* be having sex in the back of cars. Because that's not something that happens often enough to have become a cliché. And of course, what one person finds uncomfortable and not enjoyable, *no one* could possibly find enjoyable.

*But would this be enough to prove that Fawley intended to kill Taylor? Or, as the defense was counting on, would 12 jurors have their own doubts about the victim herself? "Rural jurors expect, you know, men to act like gentlemen and they expect young women to act like ladies," defense attorney Bill Johnson explains. "That mindset, we believe, certainly played into our favor."*

Yes. I'm sure it did.

## Healed, Not Quite

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/08/22/healed-not-quite/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/08/22/healed-not-quite/)>

**Date:** August 22, 2007

**Category:** BDSM & Psych, Masochism & Pain

**Topics:** anti-psychiatry, bdsm & psychology, Masochism & Pain

I think I've had two major "coming out" points in my life. One, obviously, has been accepting my sexual desires and fetishes for what they are, not being ashamed of them, and (more recently) not shying away from talking about them with other people.

The other has to do with something most people in this society would call mental illness, and my struggle to accept that as part of my life, to not feel ashamed or scared of it, and to work my way through it as *I* see fit, not as my family or lover or doctor sees fit. The breaking point with all that nonsense came when, in a state of desperation after a particularly bad spell of whatever-you-want-to-call-it, I sought out a therapist for the first time in my life. It was not the first therapist I had been to, but the first that I would go to of my own free will.

It's only now occurred to me that one of the selling points for me, upon reading the therapist's website, was her assertion that she was kink-friendly. I wasn't making any connection between my mental state and my sexuality, at the time, but something in me saw that as a good sign, and I went. And she was just like any other therapist, who was more interested in my family history of mental illness than in discussing her approach to therapy or asking me what I wanted and didn't want. By the end of a half hour she had already said I would probably need to get on medication, and dismissed my polite refusal (*voice trembling with frustration and anger, how DARE she*) by saying that we'd talk about it more in our next session.

I walked out, infuriated. But I felt more alive than I had in months, in this refusal of medication and therapy, and in the determination that now filled me to solve my problems by my damn self. Since then I have never looked back, and while I've had some pretty awful spells, some near-suicidal times, I still have felt that I'm better off exploring this part of my psyche on my own.

...why am I writing all of this on a sex blog? Well, in part because I don't have any other outlet for it, and I've come to prefer typing to writing in a journal. But it's also because something really interesting happened a few nights ago.

When I become overwhelmed, as I frequently do, it sometimes happens that I can't shut off the flow of extreme emotions and racing thoughts that accompany it. In those cases, I usually tend to shut down completely: frozen, unable to move, unable to speak, sometimes even unable to construct a coherent thought. In those times, there is nothing more that I want than to not exist, or rather, to be encased in stone, protected; to sink into myself and sleep forever. It's a difficult thing to describe. And it's a difficult thing for a lover to witness when you're in bed together. My last partner would get angry when I got this way, because he saw it as me ignoring him, shutting myself out of his life, not letting him in. He blamed me for not trying hard enough to communicate with him. He might have been right—until relatively recently, I hadn't really *wanted* to try to communicate or break out of these states, but just wanted to be left alone.

My current partner has been extraordinarily understanding about all this, but it's still been pretty fucking hard, especially when he's trying to do whatever he can to help me snap out of it, to come back down to earth. The other night, this happened, and as he asked me again and again what he could do, he began to simply rub his hands over my body, arms and legs and chest and face. And then he used his nails. And then harder. I could barely speak, but managed to tell him to *keep going, harder, more*. He squeezed me hard, until the pain cut through and I *felt* again, and then let me lay still, now euphoric from the combination of not-quite-being-in-my-body and the pain. I kept laughing, unable to stop. He attached a dozen clothespins to me, and let me breathe it in and out, relaxing even as the pain increased, even as he took them off and the blood rushed back in to sting my skin.

And it all released, and I cried, and cried. Not because I was suddenly released from a terrible mental state, but because this was okay, this was all okay. I had once frequently used pain (cutting and burning) to do the same thing, to feel something when I was numb, to bring me down to earth when I was feeling anxious, manic and high. But I had left it all behind me, or brought it out only for shameful moments of weakness, because *that's not the way you're supposed to deal with things*.

The message I internalized when I was younger was the same for my mental aberrations as it was for my sexual deviancy: pain is bad. Inflicting pain is bad, and willingly taking it for yourself is bad. And so, having him be the one to wield the pain, and to tell me I was beautiful as I took it in, completely shattered both of those falsehoods in one stroke.

## Exiles Workshop: Bottoming 101

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/08/19/exiles-workshop-bottoming-101/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/08/19/exiles-workshop-bottoming-101/)>

**Date:** August 19, 2007

**Category:** Communication and Consent, Labels and Roles, The Scene, Workshops

**Topics:** communication, Exiles, identity politic, limits, Public Play, workshop

On Friday night, a friend and I went to check out the monthly workshop held by The Exiles, a primarily queer women's BDSM group. I'd actually thought it was an exclusively lesbian organization, which is why I'd never checked it out before—I suppose it's more “women who play with women” focused.

The presentation was preceded by about a half hour of announcements and administrative business: upcoming parties and workshops, several appeals for volunteers, announcements of different members leaving or taking new positions within the administrative hierarchy. Like I've said before, it's been both a relief and a source of some amusement to me that like any club or hobbyist's group, some elements of the dark, nasty world of BDSM can be rather mundane. I certainly had not expected a business meeting as a warm-up to watching our presenter strip and get whipped with canes.

The first half of the presentation was very, very basic. Audience members helped contribute to lists of what we get out of bottoming (why we enjoy it), and when we have to stop (or when we don't enjoy it). The third list was more interesting: why do we continue even when we want to stop? The list included some pretty awful stuff, including “fear of being ridiculed,” and some that I've experienced, such as “afraid the scene will end completely,” “not wanting to hurt the top's feelings,” and, perhaps most disturbingly, “unable to break out of deep bottom/subspace.” One top shared a story of a bottom she used to play with who had once gotten so deep into her masochistic headspace that she failed to safeword even when her physical safety was being jeopardized, and by the time a third party had intervened, she'd received several cracked ribs. Stories like that are terrifying for me, because I've definitely reached points where it was extremely difficult for me to determine my limits or to remember to say “stop.”

That point in particular raised a discussion of the importance of communicating your limits and your common reactions to things with your top beforehand—because once you're in the scene, it can become extremely difficult for either of you to tell what's okay and what's not okay without ending things completely. Crying, for example, is a reaction that some bottoms are completely fine with, and even something that they want to get to; in others, it's a sign that things are going terribly wrong, and they need a break. But unless you've let your top know that, one way or the other, they might misinterpret your reactions as the opposite of what they mean to you, what you think they signify.

The “demo scene” was really, really interesting to me, for a few reasons. First, it really helped me to understand the whole “bottom vs. submissive” debate better—Rae, the presenter, was most definitely bottoming, not submitting. There was very little, if any, D/S dynamic present in the scene, which involved clothespins (part one) and caning/booting (part two). I think that because bottoming has been pretty inseparable from submission, for me, it was hard for me to imagine a scene like this.

The second point of interest for me was Rae's limits, and seeing how much the top gave her. Having only seriously played with one person (and not being much of a porn watcher), I've wondered, sometimes, how my limits compare to other people. And yes (I'm embarrassed to say), in part that's a pride thing—am I a *good* sub? Am I a *good* masochist?

After the presentation, we stood around for a bit, and talked about the awkwardness we both feel in identity-based groups like this, where we fit in based on one aspect of our lives (our submissive sexual identity) but probably have very little in common with most of the women there, otherwise. Besides being relatively young (I'd say the bulk of the women there were over 40; we're both in our 20s), our lives and desires are structured around an opposition to a lot of the stuff that's very normal for most people, and by extension most people involved in the BDSM scene. And a lot of the stuff that's normal for us might seem alien to them. If most of my identity was based on my sexuality, I would feel right at home at things like this—but it isn't, and I don't. And a lot of other aspects of my life can make it seem very far away from home: the preponderance of leather, for example, is a little off-putting for me as a vegan; the fact that the room applauded when someone mentioned that the Folsom Street Fair is endorsed *by the mayor* is a little weird for me as an anarchist.

And I guess that's a longer topic for another time...

## Friction Burn

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/08/17/friction-burn/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/08/17/friction-burn/)>

**Date:** August 17, 2007

**Category:** BDSM in the Media, Coming Out, Relationships

**Topics:** Coming Out, relationship

Some time ago I received a review copy of *Nobody Passes*, an anthology on, yes, passing, edited by Mattilda (AKA Matt Bernstein Sycamore). But I hadn't actually picked it up until last night, and the first essay I turned to was this one, by Stacey May Fowles:

*There is a friction burn on my left wrist that I have hidden with a collection of brightly colored plastic bracelets that I bought for forty-nine cents apiece from the local Goodwill. My mother is transfixed by the gaudy accessories as they noisily slide up and down my arm each time I lift my glass of white wine to my mouth, and I realize quickly that my camouflage is fault.*

*Pay attention to what I'm hiding, the bracelets scream.*

*"Are you all right?" she asks me as I pull my sleeve beneath the bracelets and over the crimson marking.*

*"Work. Work's been busy," I lie.*

*In truth I haven't been sleeping well, but work or insomnia or a packed agenda cannot be blamed. The friction marks and the bruises are to blame for the lack of sleep, and as I casually lie to my mother I suddenly realize that I am more awake than I have ever been.*

So yeah, it hit home. Just a little bit. This is such a beautiful essay, describing the author's trials with coming to terms with her submissive side. Especially heartbreaking is her description of her long-time boyfriend finally leaving her because he can't deal with her desire to be verbally degraded and physically, as he sees it, abused.

*I am a carefully cultivated companion at dinner parties, the good girl you bring home to your parents. My admission of a need to be his whore has suddenly destroyed this well-crafted illusion.*

...I wish the piece was available online, so I could simply link to it, but I suppose I should probably just encourage folks to buy the book. After all, there's a lot of other interesting stuff in it, too.

## Fear of Submission

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/08/14/fear-of-submission/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/08/14/fear-of-submission/)>

**Date:** August 14, 2007

**Category:** D/s, Feminism, Masochism & Pain

**Topics:** D/s, Feminism, Masochism & Pain, shame

Sometimes, I want to just forget everything I've learned, deny my desires, and shut it all out of my life; sometimes I want to erase everything I've written here (as I have once before) and never play with anyone ever again. Sometimes I wonder if I'll ever feel completely okay with what I want and with who I am.

And that, in itself—the fact that I'm often *not* okay, that I get scared of myself—is at times profoundly disturbing, and makes me feel somewhat ashamed and embarrassed.

A lot of the embarrassment comes from the fact that I don't often get to see other people having those same thoughts and worries. I know that everyone does (right?), but I also feel that this is something that I should be over by now, that because I know intellectually that there's nothing wrong with what I feel and what I want, I shouldn't be agonizing over it as much as I do. It's also in large part due to the fact that my partner, who's as new to this as I am, has had a far easier time with it than I have, and has very rarely touched the "oh my god, am I really like this" moments.

We talked about this last night, and he said something that I'd never thought of, but that makes a lot of sense to me: being dominant and assertive is seen, in our culture, as a positive quality (especially in



men), and so his being a dom doesn't really create a lot of dissonance—while his desires have certainly troubled him from time to time, especially at first, the overall position of dominance hasn't been disturbing to him in the same way that submission is to me. Submission can be much more perturbing, because it's not valued in our culture the way that dominance is; submission means that you're not strong enough, that you've lost.

I've struggled with that dominance game all my life, constantly fighting to prove that I am smart and strong, confident and capable. It's often felt to me that I have to work *extra* hard to get the same respect as male peers, to be regarded as an equal. And I feel that I've largely succeeded in that.

So it's really not all that surprising, then, that coming to terms with a side of myself that finds a deep satisfaction in being ordered to a man's feet, to be collared and bound, to be spanked and slapped, to be choked and suffocated, has been just a little difficult. For me, my sexual identity as a submissive is a complete juxtaposition of the persona I present to the rest of the world, or at least, that I *want* to present. I suspect that a lot of my friends would be shocked to learn that I'm a submissive. For him, his identity as a dom is a little clearer: domination is a positive attribute for him, and his personality is markedly assertive and dominant to begin with. I expect that even if his friends might be a little surprised at the extent of some of the things he enjoys (especially his sadistic side), his general position as a dom would not be at all surprising.

*More thoughts, upon reflection:* What's interesting is that I *don't* have the same issues around specifically masochistic desires. I've always been okay with fantasies or actual play that's more focused on pain and endurance (clamps, whipping, cutting, etc.) than on the D/S aspect. But that, too, fits in with my background: if the submission is a problem for me because I've actively combatted an association with that in my "regular" life, the masochism fits right in with a history of using pain to break through troubling mental states (began cutting and burning myself at age 14) and a fascination with asceticism and martyrdom (very much a self-denying, morality-obsessed activist type up until a few years ago).

## Gratitude.

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/08/11/gratitude/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/08/11/gratitude/)>

**Date:** August 11, 2007

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I'm in work-overload right now, and so will have to hold off on some of the longer posts I want to write. But I just felt like putting it out there, for any of the kinky bloggers I've recently started reading and engaging with (Eileen, May, Trinity, Dw3t-Hthr, earlbecke, and all the rest):

Thank you.

Thank you for helping me feel normal. And thank you for blowing my mind with your insights and observations and challenges. Makes me feel like singing and crying.

## Submissive, Bottom, or...?

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/08/04/submissive-bottom-or/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/08/04/submissive-bottom-or/)>

**Date:** August 4, 2007

**Category:** Labels and Roles

I'm often irked by the restrictions and assumptions associated with most of those labels I currently identify myself with ("feminist" and "anarchist" primary among them). It's only relatively recently that I've begun to think of myself as a submissive, and only more recently that I've started to reconsider that label and all the baggage it carries.

That reconsideration comes mostly from a disturbing trend I've noticed that tries to define "submissive" in a particular way, and to cast all those not fitting in with that definition as "not *real* submissives" — it strongly reminds me of debates around the term "feminist."

Trinity writes, in several comments on A Place to Draw Blood Laughing, that there is indeed a distinction between "real" submissives and fake submissives, or rather between submissives and bottoms.

*I really find [the] whole "oh, I'm not a masochist" schtick annoying. Fine, if you're a bottom and are specifically negotiating for the meeting of your own needs. Less fine if you're presenting yourself as submissive, as someone who wants to serve another. Service is not about finding someone who happens to suit your perfect fantasy, but about giving of yourself because of a driving inner need.*

*[...] There are a lot of people out there in the world who love to talk about how sub they are but as soon as you talk to them, "Oh, no pain. Oh, wait, you're not gonna wear a corset for me?... What IS this, anyway?" ...That to me is assuming bottoming (wanting to do something for one's own fun) is submitting (wanting to serve, obey, please.)*

*"Hey, will you flog me? I'd get off on it" doesn't [bother me] at all. Or "May I lick your boots?" or any number of things a person would not do or offer to do if it didn't bring him, himself, sexual gratification. It's when someone pretends to understand that what I want from SUBMISSION is not that, and then attempts to play games with my head, that I get pissed. There's nothing wrong with being a greedy little bottom.*

I totally get Trinity's beef with subs/bottoms who try to dictate her role as a domme down to the color of her boots and the type of rope she uses to tie them up. But I have to admit that I'm still confused by her distinction between "submissive" and "bottom." Is it that the bottom gets off on specific acts she is ordered to do, or has done to her, and the submissive gets off on the orders themselves, regardless of whether or not they're pleasurable? That is, a "real" submissive, I think she's saying, is one who will equally enjoy washing his mistress' toilet, changing the oil in her car, sucking her cock, or being under her boot.

So, are you not a *real* submissive if you ask your domme permission to lick her boots, or request anything at all from her? Are *real* submissives the same as servants, slaves? And by extension, are you not a dominant if you only ask your submissive to do things you know she derives pleasure from, if you don't really enjoy orders *for the sake of making orders*?

I've generally thought Trinity's writings are awesome, and I don't exactly disagree with her, here — but I do find the general "*real* submissives do X, Y, and Z" stance to be a little too reductionist. I don't think it's a question of whether or not someone is a real submissive or not, but a question of better negotiation and discussion about what's going on. It's one thing for a self-identified submissive to gush about his total subservience and willingness to please mistress, oh, anything mistress wants, and then get cranky when she isn't the perfect Queen Bitch he was fantasizing about. I totally get how frustrating that must be. But it's quite another for that same submissive to say, "well, I actually don't really like pain all that much, and I especially enjoy this and that," and to then get upset at him for posturing as a submissive when he's *really* a "greedy little bottom." I understand that Trinity is specifically saying there's nothing *wrong* with being a bottom, and that she has no problems with bottoms who make requests of her — but only as long as they understand that it is different from *submission*, as she defines it. I imagine I'd be pretty upset if I was to start talking to a dom about playing together, and once I indicated that I wasn't willing to do X or really wanted Y, he told me I wasn't a real submissive. Note that I *wouldn't* be upset if he said that certain conditions were "musts" for him, or that he wasn't interested in certain things I wanted, and that therefore he didn't want to play with me. That's fine. But to say, "oh, you're asking to be flogged, and you don't want to cook me dinner? Then you're using the wrong label to describe yourself." — that's pretty insulting.

I generally become frustrated with thoughts like these, because they usually just go in circles until I break out with a moment of "Who cares? Really, who cares?" Because as long as I'm doing what I enjoy, and what my partner enjoys, what difference does it make whether I'm a "submissive" or a "bottom with submissive tendencies and a strong masochistic streak"?

## A Harsh Lesson

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/07/09/a-harsh-lesson/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/07/09/a-harsh-lesson/)>

**Date:** July 9, 2007

**Category:** Coming Out

**Topics:** Coming Out, Feminism, sexual minorities, vanilla folk

Just when I felt like I had finally gained some degree of self-confidence regarding my sexuality...

Tonight, I learned that there's a world of difference between "coming out" to other kinky folks and to vanilla friends. While talking to a group of friends, one of them began describing a documentary on fetishes he'd recently watched, and how uncomfortable it made him feel. He was specifically talking about a section of the documentary about people who enjoy being degraded, and expressed his shock and horror upon learning that people *actually did this*, that this existed. What *freaks*.

Immediately, I felt my stomach churning, and I became terrified to respond in any way — I was afraid that any reaction, however slight, would either "give me away," or be a lie; I was afraid to say something like, "Of course people do that, and there's nothing wrong with it," but I also wasn't about to nod in agreement or act like I didn't know anything about it.

Then, the two other women in the group — both self-identified feminists — began to discuss whether or not such activities were "okay." As in, "I guess it's okay if the woman wants to...." (*Me, in my head: "Why do you get to decide what is or isn't an acceptable sexual practice for a woman to engage in?"*)

I just walked away. Because, well, what could I say? I felt ashamed, afterward, for not being brave enough to speak out, for not saying a word to refute them. Because any word would mark me, I was afraid, as one of those freaks — or worse, as a bad feminist, as a self-hating woman, as a *masochist*.

I'm not really sure how I could have better dealt with the situation. They weren't close enough friends for me to really talk about my sex life with them, or for me to approach them afterward to tell them how they'd made me feel uncomfortable, or anything like that. More than anything, it was simply a rude awakening to remember that even within a so-called radical community, even among those I consider friends, even among those who are sexually marginalized in other ways (several in the group identified as queer), BDSM beyond "tee hee, I tied my boyfriend's hands to the bed with a silk scarf, how kinky!" is seen as sick, shocking, and potentially (if not inherently) abusive. I know that my friends would never mean to intentionally insult me, and I'm sure that they wouldn't continue to say such things in my presence if I had told them that I was a submissive, that I liked that sort of thing, and that if they had a problem with that we could discuss it some other time. But to do that would be to step out in a way that I'm just not ready for.

## First Rope Bondage Workshop

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/07/03/first-rope-bondage-workshop/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/07/03/first-rope-bondage-workshop/)>

**Date:** July 3, 2007

**Category:** Public Play, The Scene, Workshops

**Topics:** beginner bdsm, bondage, Citadel, Public Play, workshop

"Do you switch, or do you just bottom?"

It took me a second before I could respond. "I just bottom," I said, the words feeling heavy and difficult in my mouth. I had never said them before; I had never said anything of the sort to anyone who wasn't my partner.

Tonight, he and I went to the Rope Bondage Peer Workshop in San Francisco. I was incredibly nervous before going into the Citadel, where the workshop was being hosted — mostly because I was about to "go public" with an aspect of my life that, until now, had been intensely private.

At first, we stood around awkwardly while some of the regulars set up their equipment for suspension bondage, and for a minute, I was afraid that we were going to be expected to know what to do, or that I

was going to say or do something that would be “wrong” or mark me as a total newbie. But everyone was incredibly friendly and helpful, and a few of the regulars (including the hosts, Madame Butterfly and Lane) instructed a few of us in some basics. By the end of the night, I was in a full harness, stretching into “stockings” running to my ankles, and tied by one wrist to a cross. It felt pretty awesome.

I was surprised by how casual everything seemed, how *normal*. But then, I’m not sure why that was so surprising — after all, any hobbyists’ club is designed to give people a place where their interests or obsessions are completely normal. It’s like a sci fi convention or a birdwatchers’ meeting. I suppose the real shock, then, was that kink is no different — that sex can be a hobby.

## The Kink Chord

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/06/27/the-kink-chord/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2007/06/27/the-kink-chord/)>

**Date:** June 27, 2007

**Category:** BDSM in the Media, Coming Out

**Topics:** Coming Out, Secretary

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A recent column by Andrea Nemerson included a letter from a woman in her early twenties whose experience is eerily similar to mine: “I have always felt kind of indifferent about sex. I can enjoy it OK. I get horny as much as other people my age, as far as I can tell. It just isn’t that interesting to me.... Then recently I watched the movie *Secretary*, and it was like a revelation! [...] Do you think it is possible for BDSM to be an inbuilt kind of sexual preference, as unchangeable as homosexuality?”

“Yes,” says Andrea. “We all know people who’ve gone freaky for a while because it seemed for whatever reason to be the thing to do and then reverted, but for every trendoid there’s an earnest freak who can remember being the kid who always wanted to be the captive princess or the cowboy tied to the fence by wild Indians and was never all that enthusiastic about being rescued when the time came. I believe a lot of people can enjoy a little role play or think it’s fun to get tied up prettily and tickled or teased, but people can enjoy a little of all kinds of things. If you see something like *Secretary* and feel the deep and unmistakable thwang of a chord being struck way deep in your soul, I think you can trust that that chord was there all along awaiting striking.”

*Secretary* came out in 2003, which means that it’s been well over four years since that chord was struck, for me. And yet, it’s actually only been about a year and a half since I first began to truly explore my submissive and masochistic side; it took me a long time to get over my inhibitions and my conviction that I would never find a partner who would be able to give me what I really wanted. And even then, it’s only been about six months, give or take, that I’ve been able to consistently enjoy s/m play without any lingering feelings of guilt, shame, or fear. For a long time, I was too afraid to really let go, to truly submit, not for fear of being injured or abused, but for fear of not wanting to come back.

It’s pretty incredible how much I’ve changed, in that respect, over the past year. I feel a degree of confidence in my sexuality, and in myself as a whole person, that I have never experienced before. I don’t mean to imply that submission and masochism are inherently tools for self-realization or confidence, but rather that anything that unlocks hidden desires and shatters taboos, destroys conventional notions of morality, of right and wrong, can be liberatory. It’s a wonderful thing.

## Clothespins

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2006/06/27/clothespins/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2006/06/27/clothespins/)>

**Date:** June 27, 2006

**Category:** Smut

NOTE: This post contains explicit sexual imagery and descriptions of BDSM play.

His mouth was wet and hot over mine, as clumsy hands pushed aside the sheets and tugged at clothing. He pulled me upright, running his hand up my back to seize my hair, pulling my neck back sharply. His other hand worked its way around my throat, delicately at first, then with a firmness that never fails to start my entire body humming.

“Do you want to play?” he murmured into my ear. I nodded. “Good. I want to use the clothespins. Get them for me. And your collar and cuffs.”

Several minutes later, I was cuffed and bound to a ring secured above the entry to my bedroom. My hands hung loosely in their cuffs, as I stood completely naked, save for the collar.

“I’m going to start with your nipples.” He stared directly at me as he spoke, another message in his eyes: This will hurt. And you will endure it.

He suddenly moved close to me, his chest against mine, and hooked his finger into the ring of my collar, forcing my head up to look into his face. “Tell me, at any point, if it’s too much. You will tell me if you need to stop. Do you understand?”

“Yes.”

“Good. Are you ready?” I hesitated; I was frightened, and must have looked it. Not six months ago, I could barely tolerate a light pinch to my nipples, and although I had endured significantly stronger torture more recently, the clothespins looked...a little scary. But he always has a way of pushing my limits, and so despite my fear, I nodded.

The first clothespin went on, and I almost laughed at how easy it was. The second went on just the same. After a few seconds it started to burn—yet I also felt the tips of my nipples become intensely cold. The fear swelled up again, and I looked pleadingly at him. Take them off, take them off! I thought. But I said nothing.

“Breathe,” he whispered. “Don’t forget to breathe.” I released the air I’d been holding in tightly, and gasped in a few short breaths as the burning sensation became increasingly intense.

And then, in a flash, it was gone. Not gone, exactly – the pain remained, but the rest of me was far, far away. My knees buckled slightly, and I rested my weight on those soft cuffs suspending me from the doorway. I suddenly felt calm and safe, held by these cuffs, held by him, held by him through these clamps and through this granting of pain. I barely felt the rest of the clothespins as they went on—along my inner thighs and ass, up and down my sides. So much sensation in so many places, all mixed together. I hung there, drunk and delirious, as he simply stood and watched me.

I was already exhausted, and the combination of the pain and the blood rushing from my suspended arms was quickly sending me towards unconsciousness. “I should stop,” I said, weakly. He ran his hand along my face.

“I’ll start with your nipples,” he said, and took off the first clothespin.

If I had felt sleepy before, I was certainly awake now. I had almost forgotten the pressure on my nipples until it was suddenly released, and the pain was almost more intense than when they’d first gone on. He quickly removed the other clothespins and unhooked my arms from the ring, and gently led me to the bed. My cuffs and collar still on, he cradled me and kissed my face lightly. “You took a lot,” he said admiringly. I was still pretty far gone, and so could barely acknowledge him. I felt drugged, intoxicated by sensation. He stroked my body and rubbed my ass and thighs where the clothespins had been, then moved his finger gently inside me. “You’re so wet...” I smiled. It never fails to amaze me how such seemingly non-sexual activity can so plainly arouse me.

He pushed in deeper. “Mmm...” With his other hand, he unhooked my cuffed hands from each other, and grasped my right wrist, pulling it down towards his swelling cock. “God, you feel so good,” he said. “Harder.” I stroked harder, and he sighed, increasing his movement inside me. I shifted my weight

slightly, until we were half-lying on the bed, each of us firmly stroking the other. The pleasure I now felt was made all the stronger by the pain high I was still riding, and I thrust myself up against his hand, moaning. He suddenly removed his fingers from me and pushed me down on my back, straddling me. “Play with yourself,” he ordered, “I want to come in your mouth.” He pushed his cock up against my mouth, which I eagerly received, running my tongue along the underside of his shaft as he thrust himself deeply into my throat. My eyes watered as I gagged, and pulled away slightly. I was already getting close as he pulled out of my mouth and started to stroke himself vigorously. “I’m going to come,” he said slowly.

“So am I...” He thrust himself back into my mouth as he came, loudly, my own moaning muffled by his cock as I came along with him, grasping tightly to him with my free hand.

We lay, panting, dizzy, clinging to each other. I could barely move, but managed to shift onto my side and pushed myself away from him slightly in order to breathe. He unlocked the collar and cuffs and put them away. My head spun as if I’d woken up suddenly from a deep sleep, or a dream—but soon, as we lay next to each other, I began to drift off to a very real sleep, content and happy and loved, covered in his marks.

## Fantasy Come True?

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2006/05/05/fantasy-come-true/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2006/05/05/fantasy-come-true/)>

**Date:** May 5, 2006

**Category:** BDSM in the Media, Feminism

**Topics:** Feminism, media criticism, pro-sub

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Rachel Kramer Bussell wrote this story in her *Village Voice* column about the world of pro subs, or at least, two of them. The story focuses on Joan Kelly, author of *The Pleasure’s All Mine: The Memoirs of a Professional Submissive*, but also speaks (briefly) to New York submissive Ophelia. My favorite quote from Kelly, about the business: “Some subs won’t take off their G-strings but will let you cane the shit out of them. There are women like me who’ll get naked and jerk off in front of you, but you better not start caning the hell out of me unless it’s my idea.” Beautifully put.

But then, there’s this:

*Byron Mayo, co-owner of the BDSM advertising hot spot Eros-Guide.com and former owner of a commercial San Francisco dungeon, has nothing but praise for the skills pro subs bring to their trade. “You can touch places in a really good sub session that most marriages don’t get to in years. The result is a sense of psychological intimacy most of us crave but rarely get,” he says. “In a world of political correctness, confusing role models, and enforced ‘equality,’ the ability to tell a beautiful, intelligent, and demure woman to get on her knees and do what you say is a fantasy come true.”*

And stunningly, this statement goes unchallenged by Bussell. In a single sentence, Mayo pretty much makes the case for a feminist backlash against BDSM play (at least, with male dom/female sub): BDSM play enables men to act out their sexist urges without fear of reprisal in a world they see as being restricted by “political correctness” and “enforced equality.” Of course, it’s quite possible that what Mayo intended to convey was exactly the opposite—that BDSM play is not inconsistent with feminism, and that dominant men often turn to pro subs for their kink precisely because of the widespread perception of the contrary being true; that it is a relief, for them, to be able to dominate sexually without fear of that persona being confused with their character in “reality.” Which makes sense. But to be honest, I’ve got my doubts about anyone who seriously uses the phrases “political correctness” and “enforced equality.”

## Unexpected...

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2006/04/20/unexpected/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2006/04/20/unexpected/)>

**Date:** April 20, 2006

**Category:** Mistakes

**Topics:** bad scene

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I've been fully aware of the fact that BDSM play can mess with one's emotions. A lot. I hadn't yet experienced the full extent of that, however, until a week ago, when I suddenly, and completely unexpectedly, broke down crying in the middle of an otherwise extremely pleasant play session. (A terrible term, but I'm at a loss for anything better.)

So what spurred the flood of tears? A single (misdirected) stroke of my belt to my lower back. It wasn't painful, not any more or less than what I've been given, before. It wasn't particularly sudden—I was ready for the blow. What I wasn't ready for, the only factor I can figure, is the fact that it landed on my lower back, a location I know to be one of the few spots on the body you're really not supposed to hit.

The moment was an intensely confusing one, and it wasn't until I began to calm down a bit that I realized the overwhelming emotion I was struggling with was, simply, fear. But fear of what, exactly? A fear of getting physically hurt, to be sure—it wasn't that getting hit on my back was particularly painful, but that it could potentially injure me.

I'm honestly at a loss for what was "really" going on. I haven't played with a belt since. I want to try, again, but I think it'll take a little while to work back into it again.

## Submission and Dependency

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2006/03/27/submission-and-dependency/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2006/03/27/submission-and-dependency/)>

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**Category:** BDSM & Psych, Relationships

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My last relationship ended with M walking out on me while I begged him, "Please don't leave me...please don't leave." This, even though I was the one who'd insisted on putting an end to our relationship.

It was a profoundly disturbing moment.

For most of my life, I've been nearly obsessed with the idea of freedom and true independence. When I was younger, this took the form of isolation and dreams of "escape," and as I got older, actually leaving home. In all of my adult relationships, independence has been a central theme; my most often-heard complaint was a feeling of being held back, or smothered, or that the other person was too clingy, too dependent on me.

When M walked out on me, that night, I realized that all this time, these past several years, I had been more dependent on him than he ever had on me.

As a child, I had frequent recurring nightmares, the most powerful and memorable of which involved me curling up in bed with one of my parents (though it was never clear to me which one), and being unable to scream as a monster of some sort walked into the room, scooped me up, and carried me out, without my mom or dad ever waking up. Once, I told a friend about this dream, and he joked,

“Wow, you didn’t have abandonment issues.” I laughed – but it was startling, and something I had never thought of before. After all, I never had been abandoned, in any way (at least, not to my knowledge), and in fact had wanted, even as a child, to be far more solitary and independent than my parents ever allowed me to be.

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In the foreword to his book *SM 101*, Jay Wiseman writes, “Some motivations [for BDSM] are pathological. Dominants may have “old stuff” going on regarding frustration, sadists regarding anger, submissives regarding dependency, masochists regarding guilt or self-loathing.” Of course, he goes on to say, this is by no means the norm – most people interested in SM do not have these sort of issues to work through, or at least (and this is important), no more than most other “normal” people do.

My fear in “coming out” to myself as a submissive (and even more, perhaps, as a masochist), is that it’s tied to my psychology; that there’s no way my desire to be tied up and beaten can be separated from past issues of dependency, guilt, and self-loathing. That notion’s only reinforced by quite a bit of what I’ve read on the subject, both fiction and non. *Secretary*, for example – the movie that really pushed me to start acknowledging my submissive sexual fantasies – features two characters that are far from normal. Mr. Grey, the dominant, exhibits a multitude of obsessive-compulsive tendencies, a need to control himself and his environment – not just his submissive. Lee Holloway, the sub, is introduced to us as she gets out of a mental hospital; she’d been placed there after her mother’s discovery of her self-mutilation/cutting. In her case, it’s made explicitly clear that her submission to Mr. Grey replaces her need to cut herself – she is able to stop because he tells her to. I’ve read other BDSM (nonfiction) erotica that has dealt with similar themes, especially in tying the submissive’s past of abuse, guilt, or low self-esteem to their eroticizing of those same feelings. It all seems to make some sort of sense – that one of the “reasons” for BDSM is to have a place to play with those emotions and traumas that haunt us.

But as satisfying and releasing as sex (of any sort) can feel, it’s not therapy, and really shouldn’t be treated as such. Perhaps it’s not all that surprising that I’ve been able to twist negative feelings of dependency and self-hatred into pleasant ones of sexual submission and masochism – but this sort of sexual play doesn’t “heal” me, nor does it lessen the experience to know that it’s tied to some rather unpleasant parts of myself. More importantly, having “issues” of guilt or dependency isn’t necessarily a sign of pathology; when Wiseman points out that BDSM folk don’t have issues to work through any more so than do “normal” people, it’s a really important point: We’re all fucked up, one way or another.

## Introduction.

**Source:** <[www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2006/03/22/introduction/](http://www.subversivesub.wordpress.com/2006/03/22/introduction/)>

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If you’ve found this blog, welcome. Currently, this blog is primarily my own outlet for writing about my experiences with BDSM and putting fantasies into words. Here’s how it all began.

I’ve always liked pain, I suppose, but it’s only recently that I’ve begun to associate real pleasure with pain—before, it was always a way to find relief and focus, burning myself with a match or cutting on my arms and legs, a desperate attempt to find some sort of clarity when anxiety/depression became too much to bear. Mostly, that ended after I left high school, and found other ways to channel my frustration and tension. But some six months ago, following the breakup of my longest and most defining relationship, I began to burn myself again, at least once a week over the course of several months. While I had a vague



sense of it being a “bad” way to handle the situation—inflicting physical pain to rid myself of emotional suffering—I wasn’t sure why, exactly, that was. The scars would be noticeable and long-lasting, to be sure, but I wasn’t really damaging myself in any dangerous way. And if it could provide me with the temporary relief I needed, then hell—how was it any different than popping a pill or spending 50 minutes with a therapist?

Months passed, and I became involved with someone new. I noticed him looking at the scars on my arms several days before he asked; he already knew the answer. I was expecting worry, concern—my last partner, I was sure, would have tried to talk me into “getting help.” He just listened. He didn’t doubt for a second my ability to handle the situation, or my judgment; he merely asked how it made me feel, why I felt like I need to burn myself, and (most importantly) if I felt like it helped me. He seemed to understand my need for focus, and that pain was a reasonable (if, perhaps, unusual) method of obtaining that. He did suggest that the permanent tissue damage maybe wasn’t such a great idea, but didn’t ask that I stop, or insinuate that my behavior was indicative of a troubled mind, a warped personality, a sickness, a mental disorder.

When I first recognized my attraction to him, his presence became nearly overpowering, though I had no idea why. The first time I fantasized about him, I imagined him pinning my hands behind my back, one hand grasping my throat, as he stared into me. Dominating me. Consuming me. The first time we fucked, it seemed completely natural when he encircled my wrist tightly with his hand, holding it firmly to the small of my back as I sat astride him, gently rocking, neither of us speaking, looking deeply into each others’ eyes. It was several weeks later that we finally talked; I was on my back, and put my arms up over my head, grasping the bed. He put both his hands on mine, kissing my neck, when I whispered, “Do you want something to tie my hands?” A pause; a silence.

“No...not right now.” He continued where he’d left off.

I was mortified. Of course he doesn’t want to tie you up, you stupid slut, you...my god, he must think...he must...”

He stopped, shifting to lay beside me. He put his arms around me. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah, I’m just...was that too much?”

“No, it’s...what do you have to tie your hands?”

“Rope.” A pause.

“Yeah, I’ve never tied anyone up before. I tied someone’s hands once with a t-shirt, but it wasn’t...is it okay—can we talk about this?” I nodded. And we talked.

He’d been aware, he said, of his dominant tendencies, but hadn’t really done anything in the realm of serious bondage or s/m play. I told him that I’d tried, with my ex, but that it hadn’t ever worked out so well, at least for me. I told him about how uncomfortable I felt with my desires, that I wasn’t supposed to feel this way, and he understood: good feminist women aren’t supposed to want their partners to order them around; good feminist men aren’t supposed to get excited by women obeying them.

Over the past few months, we’ve explored, and pushed, and grown more comfortable with our roles. Each of us still feels twinges of guilt, and I still sometimes end play sessions feeling ashamed, even as I feel deeply satisfied and content. This morning, I cried in his arms, after a restless night of doubts, worries, feelings of humiliation, of *what’s wrong with me, why am I like this*.

Not eight hours later, I’ve just finished wrapping the switch I cut for him in black electrical tape; he’ll be pleasantly surprised, I hope. I lightly tap the switch on the palm of my hand, once, twice, then a light rap on my wrist. I pull up the leg of my jeans. Whap. The sting is pleasant, sharper and more concentrated than the belt we’ve been using. Only five hours till he gets home, and I can hardly wait.

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