

BDSM 101

A Beginner's Introduction To The
Kinky Lifestyle



What This Class Will Teach You

- A basic overview of the major protocols that are practiced today, and what these protocols' general purposes are.
- The importance of safety, consent, and healthy communication.
- The general code of conduct when in kinky play spaces.
- What to look for in other potential play partners.
- What to avoid when mingling with other kinksters.

What Does BDSM Stand For, and What Is It?

It's actually multiple acronyms combined into one:

- **BD** = Bondage and Discipline
- **DS** = Dominance and Submission
- **SM** = Sadism and Masochism

BDSM means many different things to many different people. Everyone seeks out their own path for their own reasons. Everyone brings something unique to the table, and that's what makes BDSM so much fun! There's literally endless possibilities regarding what one can seek out in the BDSM lifestyle.

Kink vs. BDSM - What's the Difference?

Kink is a term that means many things to different people, but the general consensus gravitates more towards defining kink as something unusual or unconventional that makes a person excited (either sexually or nonsexually). On its own, kink is unstructured and can lead to unpredictable or undesirable results if one is careless in their explorations of their kinks.

BDSM is a lifestyle that is built around a structured approach to engaging in one's kinks. BDSM strongly emphasizes protocols and constant communication to ensure safety and support amongst play partners. This structured approach helps to establish a sense of control over the way in which practitioners explore their kinks.

Protocols

There's a set of fundamental rules that any form of BDSM should adhere to. All types of BDSM play fall under one or more of the following protocols:

- **SSC (Safe, Sane, and Consensual)**
- **RACK (Risk Awareness Consensual Kink)**
- **PRICK (Personal Responsibility and Informed Consensual Kink)**

SSC (Safe, Sane, and Consensual)

SSC is a good general conventional protocol for beginners and experienced kinksters alike to abide by when engaging in general forms of play. All kink play under this protocol must be Safe, Sane, AND Consensual (SSC). If you're doing something that doesn't have all three of these elements, then it's not kink. It's likely dangerous, and possibly illegal.

This protocol has been generally deemed as obsolete by many kink communities due to the impossibility of eliminating 100% of the risks involved in any kinky activity. However, it still stands as an example of what beginners should strive for as they explore the kinky lifestyle due to its emphasis on safety, clear-mindedness, and emphasis on the importance of consent.

RACK (Risk Awareness and Consensual Kink)

RACK focuses on kinksters being aware of all risks involved in the kinks they partake in, as well as the importance of consent before engaging in kink.

- Before engaging in a kinky activity, do the research regarding all potential risks that are involved in said kinky activity.
- Have a plan for when (*not if*) things go wrong.
 - Obtain any relevant specialized training required to address when things go wrong.
- If you're aware of the risks and are willing to accept the risks and possibility for a bad outcome when engaging in your chosen kinky activity, then you are capable of properly consenting to engage in said kinky activity.
- If the risks make you feel uneasy despite taking the proper steps to mitigate the risks, then you should not consent to engaging in the kinky activity.

PRICK (Personal Responsibility and Informed Consensual Kink)

PRICK emphasizes the importance of taking personal responsibility of one's actions when engaging in kink, as well as being fully informed before giving consent to engage in kink.

- Taking responsibility for one's involvement in a scene is mandatory for both safety and establishing trust with one's play partners.
- One must ALWAYS be informed of what they're getting involved with, as well as knowing all of the risks and the ways to mitigate said risks before engaging in a given kink.
- Consent can only be given when everyone is fully informed of what they're getting into and are still willing to take personal responsibility for their participation in a given kink.

RACK & PRICK

- RACK and PRICK have a lot of overlap, and they both emphasize the importance of risk awareness and taking personal responsibility for what happens during any given scene.
- Consent requires awareness of the risks involved, being informed as to what's going to happen during a given scene, and having a plan for when things go wrong.
- If you ever feel uneasy or uncomfortable with the idea of engaging in a particular scene, TELL YOUR PLAY PARTNER! TALK ABOUT IT!
- It's always okay to say **NO** and back out of a scene that you're not comfortable with.

The Importance of Consent

- Consent is a HUGE element in kink and BDSM. Nothing happens without everyone involved consenting to the activity at hand.
 - Everyone involved should have a clear idea of what they're getting into BEFORE giving their consent.
- Yes means yes. No means no. Keep it simple and straightforward.
 - "I don't know" and "maybe" and other vague answers should be considered the same as a "no" to avoid confusion.
- If someone forces someone else to participate against their will, then it's no longer kink - it's abuse, and possibly illegal.
- Consent should only be given when someone is thinking clearly.
 - Being tired, drunk, under the influence of a substance, etc. means that your mental capacity is compromised. Therefore, your consent is invalid and should be considered as an automatic "no."

A Brief Word About Healthy Relationships

- The relationship between play partners is like any other relationship between two people. It's in the interests of both individuals to keep this relationship healthy.
- Every healthy relationship requires three elements to be present:
 - Honesty
 - Open Communication
 - Trust
- Imagine a relationship as a 3-legged stool, and these three elements make up each leg of the stool. If any one of these three elements are missing, the stool falls over and fails to serve its purpose.

A Brief Word About Healthy Relationships

Honesty is critical because misunderstandings lead to unwanted outcomes.

- If your play partner isn't doing something well enough, you should be honest and tell them about it.
 - You should also help them to improve their techniques through helpful feedback!
- Lying or dancing around a problem only makes things worse.
 - Telling your partner that they're doing great when they're doing poorly means that they'll continue doing poorly because they think you like it that way.
- Being honest is how we come to a better understanding of one another.
 - It helps us to establish our boundaries with others.
 - It helps us to figure out what it is that we seek for ourselves.

A Brief Word About Healthy Relationships

Open Communication is the throughway in which we can convey our thoughts and feelings to one another.

- The willingness to communicate with one's partner is mandatory to establishing and maintaining a healthy relationship of any kind.
- One must also be willing to listen when one's partner is openly communicating with them.
- Communication is what allows us to help each other get better at what we love doing.
 - Tell your partner when their aim is off. Praise them when they're on-target.
 - Constructive criticism should be encouraged, and positive reinforcement helps to develop better habits and techniques.
 - Teamwork!

A Brief Word About Healthy Relationships

Trust is the strongest and yet most brittle pillar of any relationship.

- Developing trust in another person takes time, and it shouldn't be a fast process.
 - Honesty and open communication over time is what builds the pillar of trust in every relationship.
- Trust is absolutely required before engaging in any advanced forms of kink.
- If trust is ever broken, it's VERY difficult to repair.
 - In many cases, a breach in trust is enough to end a relationship of any kind.
- Even if broken trust can be mended, both participants will ALWAYS remember what caused the pillar of trust to have that nasty crack in it.

Saying “No” When Necessary Is Not Only Okay - It’s Mandatory

- It's common for newcomers and veterans alike to feel peer pressure occasionally when engaging with other kinksters. The social desire to please others can sometimes overwhelm one's better judgment, and this can lead to unwanted outcomes.
 - A bottom not wanting to disappoint a Top and simply taking whatever they wish to dish out.
 - A Top feeling pressured to push their play partner with more intense forms of play that make the Top feel uncomfortable.
- Being quiet when one should say “no” can lead to very bad outcomes.
 - Shutting up and taking whatever is being dealt onto you can quickly lead to a consent violation.
- Not saying “no” to others can also lead to you violating THEIR consent, as well.

Saying “No” When Necessary Is Not Only Okay - It’s Mandatory

- It is okay to say “no” at ANY phase of a scene - including during the scene itself.
- You are NOT obligated to engage in anything that you don’t wish to.
- Saying “no” helps to establish your personal boundaries with both yourself AND others.
- If someone disregards you saying “no,” then report them to the appropriate authorities and distance yourself from them.
- Saying “no” is part of both honesty and open communication in a relationship, and thus is absolutely mandatory for establishing and maintaining a healthy relationship with others and yourself.

Safewords

- Safewords are used to clearly communicate to one's play partner how you're doing.
- Safewords should ideally be easy to say and comprehend - especially if a gag is involved.
- Most common safewords:
 - **Green**: "I'm doing fine, and I'd like for the scene to keep going."
 - **Yellow**: "Let's pause and please check in with me to see how I'm doing. I may just need to catch my breath or something may be wrong, but let's talk so we can get the scene back on track."
 - **Red**: "I've had my fill and I'm ready to end the scene. Let's move onto aftercare."



Safewords

- Everyone can use safewords - including Tops!
 - A bottom should use safewords when they've had their fill.
 - A Top can use safewords when they've had their fill, as well.
 - Both Tops and bottoms can use safewords on behalf of their play partner when they sense that their partner needs to tap out of the scene.
- It's alright to use your own unique safewords so long as you and your partner know what they mean.
- Safewords can also be communicated in non-verbal ways.
 - Established hand signals.
 - A bell in the hand that means "red" once it's dropped.
 - A loud clicker or battery-operated doorbell button in the bottom's hand.

Safewords

- One should never feel ashamed to “red” out of a scene, even during a punishment.
 - Safewords exist to keep everyone (both Top AND bottom) safe by allowing people to communicate their needs to each other mid-scene.
- If you can't use your safewords reliably, then you should **NOT** engage in kink until you can reliably use your safewords!
 - A failure to use safewords correctly can lead to consent violations and potentially great bodily & psychological harm!

The Anatomy of a Scene

When two kinksters get together to engage in kink, it's called a **Scene**. There are three phases to having a scene with someone:

- Negotiations
- The Scene Itself
- Aftercare

The Anatomy of a Scene - Negotiations

- When two kinksters get together to have a scene, they first **negotiate** what they'd like to experience in said scene. They each propose what they want to do, and if necessary, they negotiate a compromise so that their interests are in alignment.
- It's also during this time that everyone specifies what their aftercare requirements are, if any.
- If neither participant can come to an agreement on how to carry out the scene, then perhaps they're not meant to be play partners. There's absolutely nothing wrong with that.
- One should never feel shame for not being able to work out negotiations with a prospective play partner.

The Anatomy of a Scene - Negotiations

Good Questions To Ask During Negotiations:

- What is it that you're seeking to experience in this scene with me?
- I like to check in with my play partners mid-scene to ensure that they're alright. Are you alright with this?
- What are your hard limits?
- Do you have any medical conditions that I should be aware of that may be good to know about in regard to what we'd like to do in our scene?
- What are your safewords, and what do they mean to you?
- What does it look like when I'm doing something wrong, and thus should change the course of the scene to get back on track?
- What does it look like when I'm doing something right, and thus should stay on the path that we're currently on because you're enjoying yourself?
- What are your aftercare needs?
- Are you alright with me following up with you in the next day or two to ensure that you're still alright and feeling supported?

The Anatomy of a Scene - The Scene Itself

- If negotiations go well and everyone involved is on-board and willing to consent to the scene itself, then things move on to the fun part - the scene itself!
- The scene itself should only ever consist of what was discussed during negotiations.
 - Trying to negotiate for additional activities mid-scene is generally frowned upon, especially when it comes to pick-up play and with new play partners.
 - Giving consent for something new during a scene could be invalid as one may not be thinking clearly mid-scene due to the activities at hand. This can lead to unnecessary risks.
- Checking in mid-scene and asking for a color (aka a safeword or indication of how your play partner is doing) is encouraged to ensure that everyone is doing alright.
 - Never shy away from checking in because you're afraid of "ruining the mood" or disrupting one's headspace. Safety first!

The Anatomy of a Scene - The Scene Itself

Some general rules of thumb for any kind of scene that you engage in:

- Keep your play area clear of unwanted clutter, distractions, and bystanders.
- Remember your negotiated safewords.
- Acclimation is **ALWAYS** a good idea!
 - Start off gentle and build up slowly until you find your play partner's intensity threshold.
 - Once found, stay just below that intensity threshold for as long as your play partner wishes to take it.
 - Taking short breaks in between peaks of intensity by going softer allows for your partner to recover and for the scene to last longer.
- **HAIL HYDRATE!!!**
- Communicate with your play partner to better fine-tune your kinky activities so that both of you are enjoying yourselves.

The Anatomy of a Scene - Aftercare

- **Aftercare** is what happens once a scene is finished; it's where both play partners tend to each others' needs after having an intense experience together, and provide support to one another.
- Aftercare is **MANDATORY**, even if it's a short 5-minute moment to catch one's breath and checking in to make sure that everyone's feeling good before moving on with the rest of the evening.
 - If your play partner walks away from you without providing or even mentioning aftercare, that's a MAJOR red flag!
- Aftercare should always be offered even if your play partner says they don't need it; you'll be surprised that some day they may actually want it!

The Anatomy of a Scene - Aftercare

What is the Purpose of Aftercare?

- Aftercare is a period of time for everyone to recover physically from the scene.
- It's also a time where play partners can provide moral and emotional support to one another. After all, they both just experienced an out-of-the-ordinary moment with each other.
- It's a time to talk about what worked in the scene, as well as what didn't work or could use improvement next time.
 - Never be afraid to give and receive constructive criticism. It's how we learn to become better kinksters!
- Aftercare also serves as a bonding moment between play partners, which also serves to further build trust in one another.

The Anatomy of a Scene - Aftercare

What does Aftercare Look Like?

- It's whatever you and your play partner need to recover from the scene, and to feel supported by one another.
 - Aftercare can be as elaborate as wrapping the bottom in a blanket and providing water and a snack while showering them in praise for how well they did during the scene.
 - Aftercare can also be as simple as a 5-minute breather and a "well that was fun, how are you feeling?"
- Aftercare should last for as long as is required to ensure that everyone involved is feeling good before moving on to the next activity of the night.
 - Be sure to specify how long your aftercare needs will likely take during negotiations so that your play partner can make sure that they block out the time required to spend with you!
- Everyone has unique aftercare needs, and those needs can change with the moment.
 - Tops also need aftercare from time to time!

The Anatomy of a Scene - Aftercare

- Follow up with your play partner the following day or so to check in with them.
- If a scene was particularly intense, it may be a good idea to check in with them every couple of days throughout the week.
- If your play partner starts feeling strange about the scene in retrospect, be there to talk with them about it and feel out what's going through their mind.
 - Sometimes what felt great in the moment may feel weird to you later on. Having someone to talk it out with helps to keep yourself grounded in the reality of the situation, as speculation can be a spiraling rabbit hole if kept to yourself.
- Through this process of supporting each other, play partners develop ironclad bonds with one another that allow them to trust each other more and more as time goes on.
 - The stronger and more developed the bond of trust, the deeper the relationship between play partners will develop.
 - Strong relationships between kinksters tend to lead to exploration of more advanced forms of kink together.

Sex and Kink - Fun Separately AND Together

- It's a common misconception that sex is a mandatory part of kink and BDSM. This is not true whatsoever.
- Kink can be completely platonic!
 - Sometimes a person only likes to be hit or to hit others (consensually), and that's okay!
- Kink can also involve sex if all participants want it.
 - Honesty, open communication, trust, and consent are mandatory for this to work out properly!

Sex and Kink - Fun Separately AND Together

- The Ice Cream Analogy
 - Sex is like your favorite flavor of ice cream, and kink is like your favorite ice cream topping.
 - Ice cream by itself is pretty good!
 - An ice cream topping by itself is also pretty good!
 - Interesting things can happen when you mix them together, but mixing them isn't a requirement to enjoying any of these elements.



Edge Play

Edge Play is any form of kink play that has an inherent amount of risk in inflicting long-lasting or permanent harm upon a participant. This includes the more advanced forms of kink play, as performing a particular activity incorrectly can lead to long-term physical/mental/emotional harm if left unchecked.

Edge Play falls under the RACK and PRICK protocols due to their risky nature, and these protocols focus on the emphasis that all participants are to understand AND accept the inherent risks involved in these more extreme forms of play before consenting to engage in them.

As with ALL forms of kink play, one should not engage in kink play of any kind until AFTER doing extensive research into how to perform it and what risks are involved in said activity.

Examples of Edge Play

- Knife Play
- Rope Play
- Impact Play
- Breath Play
- Electrical Play
- Fire Play
- Bodily Fluids Play (piss/blood/etc.)
- Scarification
- Flesh Hooks/Hook Suspensions
- Etc.

Edge Play - Why Do People Like It?

- Edge Play brings more risk into the formula of a scene, and this also brings a certain level of excitement and thrill to the kink play, as well.
- Edge Play requires a higher level of skill and control to perform as safely as possible, and thus also feels much more rewarding to all participants when performed successfully.
- Edge Play also lends itself to more creative ways of engaging in kink, which also brings its own level of excitement and allure.
- Edge Play can also dip its toes into subject matter that usually exists in one's fantasies, and may provide an avenue to explore certain fantasies in a more controlled environment.

Edge Play - What Can Go Wrong?

- Anything and everything can go wrong in Edge Play, and one MUST be ready for when (not if) things go wrong!
- Everyone who does Edge Play must be accepting of the outcomes (both good and bad) before engaging. Failing to do so will lead to disastrous results.
- Edge Play requires greater emphasis on accepting responsibility for participating in such risky activities, and is not to be taken lightly.
- Edge Play is not for everyone, and that's okay!
 - Know your Risk Profile (i.e. what forms of kink play you're comfortable with vs. what you're not comfortable with), and stay within your comfort zone.
- Beginners are to be discouraged from leaping straight into Edge Play until they gain more experience with some of the more basic forms of kink play.

Edge Play - Things To Remember

- ALWAYS do your homework before engaging in Edge Play!
- Practice and become proficient in everything that your form of Edge Play requires.
- Have the supplies and training required to address when things go wrong.
- ALWAYS have a plan for how to get to the nearest hospital if things get too out of hand.
- Talk about the risks extensively with your play partner during negotiations, and double-check with them to see how they feel about taking on the risks!
- If you or your play partner don't feel good about engaging in Edge Play, then simply don't do it. There is no shame for defining where your personal boundaries are when it comes to any form of kink play.

What Does Kink Have To Offer?

The realm of kink is as infinite as one's imagination and creativity will allow. I personally like to break things up into three categories:

- Physical Kinks
- Mental Kinks
- Spiritual Kinks

Physical Kinks

Physical Kinks are a spectrum of possibilities that range from the most gentle titillations of the senses to the most intense experiences of the flesh.

- Cuddling and gentle caresses
- Sensation Play (feathers, vampire gloves,
- Light scratches, biting, etc.
- Wrestling for physical control
- Being restrained (rope, collars, shackles, gags, oh my!)
- Electrical & Fire Play
- Impact Play (spanking, paddling, flogging, whipping, caning, etc.)
- Medical Play (needles, stitches, blood play, etc.)
- Scarification
- Etc.

Mental Kinks

Mental Kinks are another spectrum of possibilities that focus more on the mental & emotional aspects of kink play.

- Role-playing of all sorts!
- Adopting a specific role within a dynamic with a committed play partner.
 - Pet Play, Dom & sub, Master & slave, Little & Caretaker, etc.
- Objectification
- Fear Play
- Brat Play
- Humiliation/Degradation Play

Spiritual Kinks

Spiritual Kinks are yet another spectrum of possibilities with a focus on spiritual fulfillment and enlightenment. Admittedly, this is still an area that I'm personally exploring as I go, so my knowledge in this area is limited. But what I do know thus far involves some aspects of the following:

- Cleansing of the spirit/aura/chakras
- Energy manipulation

In Conclusion...

One important thing to remember - your kinks will be different from my kinks, and that's okay. Never kink shame someone else because they do things differently, As long as they play as safely as possible, sanely, and consensually, and so long as nobody suffers any long-term negative effects from their play, then there's nothing wrong with how they go about exploring their kinks.