

BDSM 101

Basic Definitions

BDSM – An acronym combining B/D (Bondage & Discipline), D/s (Dominance & submission), S/M (Sadism & Masochism) and M/s (Master & slave) Generally used to refer to any activities between consenting adults that involve some or all of the above.

Bondage/Discipline – Bondage refers to the tying or restraining of a person, using rope, chains, cuffs or other materials. Discipline refers to the training of a person to behave in a certain way through instruction and punishment.

Dominance/submission – A consensual dynamic involving one individual exerting control/power over another, with the other relinquishes their control/power.

Sadism/masochism – Also referred to as sadomasochism. Sadism is the deriving of sexual excitement or pleasure from inflicting pain on another person. Masochism is the deriving of sexual excitement or pleasure from receiving pain. In the context of BDSM, these behaviors are entirely consensual. These are very different from the clinical definitions of sadism and masochism in the DSM (Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the primary resource for the classification of mental disorders in the United States.)

Master/Mistress/slave – A consensual dynamic similar to D/s, but with a long-term understanding in which the slave relinquishes control to their Master. Master is generally used for masculine people, but can be used for anyone. Mistress is predominantly used for feminine people.

Roles

Dominant (Dom/Domme/Domina) – The person who exerts control/power over another in the context of BDSM. Dom refers to a masculine person, Domme & Domina refer to a feminine person.

submissive (sub) – The person who relinquishes control/power to another in the context of BDSM. Quite often the first letters of the word submissive and the submissive's name are not capitalized.

Sadist – A person who derives sexual/erotic pleasure from inflicting pain.

Masochist – A person who derives sexual/erotic pleasure from receiving pain.

Top – A person who gives sensation in a scene but does not maintain a D/s dynamic.

Bottom – A person who receives sensation in a scene but does not maintain a D/s dynamic.

Switch – A person who enjoys both giving and receiving sensation. Most often they do not switch within one scene, although this does occur occasionally. “Switch” can also refer to a person who enjoys both Dominance and submission.

Fetishist – A person who is aroused by a non-sexual object, sometimes to the point of being unable to climax without that object. E.g. a foot fetishist, rubber fetishist, etc.

FemDom – A Dominant person who is feminine and emphasizes their femininity. This often refers to a female Dom/male sub relationship.

ProDomme/Dominatrix – A feminine Dominant who earns money by dominating their clients. This is most often a female Dom/male (paying) sub dynamic.

Common Lingo

A scene – A set BDSM interaction occurring during a specific time. E.g. a whipping scene at a play party.

The Scene – Refers to the BDSM community as a whole.

Aftercare – The care provided at the conclusion of a scene. Generally the care is given by the Top/Dom to the bottom/sub, although sometimes the aftercare can be mutual.

Bottom Drop/Top Drop – The feelings of sadness, depression or other negative emotions that players can sometimes feel after an intense BDSM scene. This can be psychologically based or due to the drop off of endorphin levels in the brain.

Collar – May refer to either the activity of collaring or the collar itself. The wearing of an item around the neck by the submissive or slave that has been placed there in a ritualistic way to symbolize the power dynamic between the two people. This may be confined strictly to a scene, or may be a symbol of a long term commitment between the Dominant and submissive.

DM/Dungeon Monitor – A person who is responsible for making sure attendees at a play party follow the rules and etiquette while helping to facilitate play. Some areas provide official DM training classes and require that all DMs pass this class.

Dungeon – Any space that has been set aside (and often furnished) for BDSM play.

Edge Play – Activities that deliberately push limits (with consent) or that are considered more risky than other types of play.

Endorphins – Word is derived from “endogenous morphine”. These are chemicals produced by the body that behave like morphine in causing feelings or sensations of being “high” while also providing an analgesic effect. Endorphins can be released through love, sex, spicy food, exercise, orgasm and pain.

Fetish – A non-sexual object that is the source of sexual arousal for an individual, and may be required for that person to attain sexual release. This can also refer to anything in the BDSM realm e.g. fetish party, fetish clothing, etc.

Hanky Code – A color-coding system originating in the gay leathermen’s community that allows for nonverbal communication of a person’s interests and role through the wearing of colored hankies in the back pocket (also referred to as flagging.)

Hard Limit – An act that a person is absolutely unwilling to engage in or a line that may not be crossed during a BDSM scene.

Negotiation – The act of discussing desires, hard limits and health concerns before engaging in BDSM play.

Play Party – An event generally held at a dungeon where the participants engage in BDSM play. These parties often have Dungeon Monitors and charge an entry fee.

Playing – Engaging in BDSM activities.

Protocol – Structured and enforced guidelines and rules for behavior either in the BDSM scene in general or in a specific D/s dynamic.

RACK – Acronym for Risk Aware Consensual Kink. This is a newer term that attempts to be realistic about the relative safety of a variety of BDSM activities. Often this is used to mean that a person or event welcomes edge play.

Safeword – A word used to signal distress in a scene, that brings the scene to a stop either permanently or temporarily to discuss the issue. This code word is generally something a player is unlikely to use during the course of the scene (No, Stop, etc are not good safewords). The universal safewords that are recognized at play parties are “red” and “safeword”.

SSC – Acronym for Safe, Sane, and Consensual. Created to define the limits that acceptable BDSM play should adhere to. RACK was developed in reaction to this to showcase that not all play could be considered Safe or Sane by society in general.

Types of Play

Age Play – A form of role play that emphasizes the power dynamic between adults and children, generally with the submissive partner taking on the role of an infant, child, or young person.

Animal Play – A form of role play where one or both partners take on the role of an animal. The most common types are pony play and puppy play.

Blood Play – BDSM play that involves the drawing of blood. This commonly includes play piercing and cutting, although some forms of impact play can be taken to the point of blood play.

Body Worship – The adoration of a specific body part, usually through massage, licking, kissing, sucking, or washing. Generally done by a submissive to a Dominant.

Bootblacking – The cleaning, treating and polishing of boots. This can be an act of submission, an act of service, as a part of boot worship or as a part of uniform fetish play.

Breath Play – A form of edge play where the breath is restricted, either through smothering, strangling or the use of devices such as gas masks.

CBT/TT – Cock and Ball Torture & Tit Torture. This refers to the infliction of pain onto the male genitals or the chest/breasts.

Chastity Play – A form of play during which an individual is prevented from experiencing sexual release or stimulation by the wearing of a locking device or piercing. This is often done by a Dominant to a submissive.

Consensual Non-consent – A situation in which a person has consented to be unable to revoke their consent, allowing another person to do whatever they like without the receiver being able to stop the activity.

Edge Play – Any form of play that is considered physically or psychologically riskier than most types of BDSM play, with the potential to cause significant harm. This can include breath play, fire play, and blood play among others.

Electroplay – The use of electricity to stimulate a person, generally through devices such as a TENS unit or a violet wand.

Fire Play – A form of edge play that uses fire or flame to stimulate a person's body.

Gender Play – Any form of play that involves the deliberate altering of a person's gender expression. This can include cross dressing (wearing clothes of the opposite gender for sexual pleasure) or feminization (when a Dominant person dresses a male/masculine submissive in female clothing. Sometimes this is "forced" where the submissive is resistant to the dressing.)

Genitorture – The infliction of pain onto the genitals.

Humiliation/Degradation – Psychological BDSM play where the Dominant deliberately humiliates, embarrasses or shames the submissive, or causes them to feel dehumanized.

Impact Play – Any form of play that involves the hitting of a person with fists, feet or implements. This commonly includes caning, spanking, paddling, punching, whipping and flogging.

Medical Play – A form of roleplay based around the Doctor/Nurse/patient/subject dynamic. This can also refer to any kind of play that involves medical tools, such as gynecological speculums, urethral sounds, needles, etc.

Objectification – Play that involves the dehumanizing of a person for sexual arousal. This can be done through play that treats a person as furniture, animal play, or degradation play.

Roleplay – The adoption of specific roles for sexual excitement. Examples include Animal Play, Medical Play, Priest/Nun, Teacher/student, etc.

Sensation Play – A milder form of BDSM play that focuses on unusual or surprising sensations instead of pain.

Service – A D/s dynamic in which the submissive focuses on providing service to their Dominant, e.g. giving massage, providing food and drink, lighting their cigars, caring for their boots, etc. This can also occur outside of a long-term relationship as a focus that a submissive has towards their world in general.

Spiritual BDSM – The use of BDSM experience to enhance self-awareness and expand consciousness that can also be applied to a broader spiritual practice.

Water Sports – Play that involves urine, and most often urination on a person. In some circles this can also refer to enema play.