

What is BDSM?

BDSM is an acronym that stands for

Bondage & **D**iscipline

Dominance & **S**ubmission

Sadism & **M**asochism

Bondage: Acts involving the physical restraint of a partner

Discipline: Any activity in which one person trains another person to act/ behave in a desired way, often by enforcing rigid codes of conduct and/or by punishing failure to behave

Dominance: The act of wielding authority/ control over another for a predetermined period

Submission: The act of yielding control to another for a predetermined period

Sadism: Any activity or practice involving the infliction of pain

Masochism: Any activity or practice involving the receiving of pain

BDSM is a type of kink practice.

Kink: unconventional sexual tastes or behaviors.

(source: Franklin Veaux, Xeromag BDSM Glossary, Jan. 27, 2018)

What is abuse?

Abuse is also known as partner abuse, domestic violence/abuse, or intimate partner violence (intimate partner = a person with whom you have or have had a close personal or sexual relationship). It is a pattern of behaviors a person uses to manipulate and gain/maintain power and control over their partner.

Types of partner abuse:

Physical abuse: any intentional and unwanted non-sexual physical contact a partner makes with you or objects close to your body.

Sexual abuse: any action that pressures or coerces you into doing something sexual that you don't want to do.

Emotional/verbal abuse (a.k.a. psychological aggression): a partner's using verbal and non-verbal communication with the intent to harm you mentally or emotionally and/or to exert control over you. This includes non-physical behaviors such as threats, insults, constant monitoring, humiliation, intimidation, isolation, or stalking.

Financial abuse: a partner's using money to control you (telling you what you can and cannot buy, requiring you to share control of your bank accounts, etc.).

(sources: CDC Violence Prevention: Intimate Partner Violence, loveisrespect.org-Is This Abuse?)

The most basic difference between BDSM and abuse is consent.

Consent in a BDSM context is an agreement/assent to engage in a particular activity, freely given without coercion or distress. Consent is based on the active, willing participation of everyone involved in a particular activity.

Consent is...

informed: all participants have full knowledge of the activities to which they are consenting, such as the circumstances under which the activity will take place and the possible risks, if any, inherent in the activity.

uncoerced: the participants give consent freely without use of threat, force, or intimidation.

sound: the participants' judgment is not impaired by any condition which might cloud or distort their ability to make reasonable, rational decisions.

BDSM is RACK: Risk Aware (informed), Consensual Kink!

(sources: Franklin Veaux, Xeromag BDSM Glossary, Jan. 27, 2018; loveisrespect.org-What Is Consent?)

If you are concerned that your relationship may not be consensual, ask yourself:

- Are my needs and limits respected?
- Is my relationship built on honesty, trust, and respect?
- Am I able to express feelings of guilt, jealousy, or unhappiness?
- Can I function in everyday life?
- Can I refuse to do illegal activities?
- Can I insist on safe sex practices?
- Can I choose to interact freely with others outside of my relationship?
- Can I leave the situation without fearing that I will be harmed, or fearing the other participant(s) will harm themselves/themselves?
- Can I choose to exercise self-determination with money, employment, and life decisions?
- Do I feel free to discuss my practices and feelings with anyone I choose?

If you answered 'no' to any of these questions, you may be in an abusive relationship.

(source: NCSF, BDSM Vs. Abuse Policy Statement, 1998 Leather Leadership Conference)

BDSM is ALWAYS consensual, respects limits, should be enjoyed by all participants, and is never done with the intent to cause harm!

Kink/BDSM Resources:

New England Leather Alliance (NELA)

PO Box 51361
Boston, MA 02205-1361
857-293-9502
NELAonline.org

National Coalition For Sexual Freedom (NCSF)

822 Guilford Avenue, Box 127
Baltimore, MD 21202-3707
410-539-4824
ncsfreedom@ncsfreedom.org

Organizations That Can Help If You Are
Experiencing Abuse:

The Network/La Red

PO Box 6011
Boston, MA 02114
617-742-4911

Pandora's Project:

www.pandys.org/index.html

Pamphlet lovingly created for NELA by lifestyle sadist/
dominant, kink educator, and mental health
professional Sara Scalper

BDSM is NOT Abuse

Understanding the
Differences

