

## BDSM 102.5 (Meeting People and Negotiating Play)

Introductions (Bernie and Heather)

The reasons for this workshop:

- people come to TEASE and want to play, but don't get a chance to
- people go to other events, wanting to play, but don't get a chance to
- people do find partners, but have trouble getting the kind of scene they want

Step One -- meeting people

- get off your campsite! go to activities, workshops, parties, etc
- let friends know that you're looking, so they can suggest people
- be visible (but don't be obnoxious -- more on that later)
- ignore what your parents told you -- go talk to strangers!

*3 Tips for Talking to Strangers*

1. Remember that everyone's nervous. New and uncertain situations are scary for most people, no matter how confident they may look on the outside, they're likely just as nervous as you.
2. Prepare an opening "line" Try things like saying "Hi, I'm Steve" while offering a handshake or "Hi there, I'm Sarah, would you mind if I joined you?"
3. Keep it in perspective - not everyone you meet is a potential play partner, lover, or future mistress; don't put that pressure on yourself.

*When meeting people, here are some do's and don'ts...*

- DO go up to people, smile and introduce yourself
- DON'T stand off to the side looking lonely, scary and weird
- DO be friendly and positive about things
- DON'T whine and complain (especially about how no one will play with you!)
- DO make eye contact
- DON'T stare (or ogle, leer, etc)
- DO laugh, and let your natural humour come out
- DON'T laugh awkwardly at things that aren't funny and then walk away looking confused
- DO find a reason to talk to people ("so is it your first time at TEASE?", "whereabouts are you from?")
- DON'T immediately start talking about kink ("hi... you look like someone who might be into enemas")
- DO offer to help people with things ("can I give you a hand with that?")
- DON'T touch them or their stuff without asking first
- DO pay attention to body language (use of space, physical contact, eye contact)
- DON'T send confusing or hostile messages with your own body language
- DO offer information about yourself ("it's my first time here, and I'm pretty excited")
- DON'T talk about yourself endlessly ("and then when I was 14, I discovered masturbation...")

- DO find topics of mutual interest (“hey, is that a yoyo? I used to be pretty good when I as a kid...”)
- DON’T talk obsessively about any one topic (“and then in episode 14 of season 2 of Battlestar Galactica...”)
- DO drop hints about yourself and your kinky interests (“I’m a top, and I’m looking around for someone who enjoys a heavy, thuddy flogging”)
- DON’T push too hard (“Hi, are you busy right now? I want to put some needles in your labia...”)
- DO pay attention to your personal hygiene (that means showering *every day!* maybe more than once a day, since it gets hot here at camp)
- DON’T pay more attention to a label (Dom, sub, switch) than the person.
- DO gracefully excuse yourself from the conversation if it’s going poorly instead of beating a dead horse

### Things to keep in mind:

Everyone assesses strangers to see if they’re dangerous and scary, or friendly and potentially sexy.

There are many criteria that people use to gauge “friend or foe”. Try to avoid setting off their warning signals.

Hang around with friends, not by yourself (we tend to trust people who have friends more than people who don’t).

Be confident (doesn’t matter if you’re a Dom or a sub, you can believe in yourself and feel good about yourself).

Relaxed people seem less scary and more friendly, stressed out people seem the opposite. So relax!

Once people see you play, things get easier (it sends the message that other people have deemed you safe to play with, and we tend to trust other peoples’ judgement ahead of our own).

You may have heard people talk about “new Dom syndrome”, “sub frenzy”, or “kid-in a candy store syndrome” - you want to try **everything** and you want to do it **right now**. While it can be attractive to some play partners, it can be a real turn off to others, and truthfully a bit dangerous if you find you’ve got yourself in over your head (say you agreed to a whipping scene without every practicing on a non-human target, or you’re crashing hard and have no idea how to take care of yourself). Remember that BDSM was around long before you discovered it, and it’s not going anywhere. Take your time, pace yourself and enjoy your experiences as they come along.

### Step Two -- negotiating play

Don’t assume that because you’re negotiating, you have to play! The outcome of the negotiation may be “We find each other attractive, but when it comes to BDSM we have absolutely nothing in common”. You can always just have sex.

Choosing not to play is better than having an unsatisfying scene. A bad scene means you’re wasting your own time, and each other’s time, and there’s an “opportunity cost” associated with that.

During negotiation, you may just get a bad vibe about the person that wasn’t apparent previously. You are not obligated to play! You can always say no.

However, to avoid burning bridges and making people feel bad (especially people you may

consider scary!), you need to learn to say no properly. In particular:

- be polite
- make it about you, not about them (even if it is about them)
- let them know they wouldn't enjoy a scene with you, so they're not missing anything by not playing with you

Having said all that, also try to stay open to new ideas. TEASE is a great chance to try things for the first time, especially with people who have specialized skills. And remember, you can always safeword.

Also keep in mind that there's a good possibility you will never, ever see this person again. That can be very liberating.

Be sure to let your partner know of any medical conditions that may influence the scene. Also be sure to discuss sexual limits, and be explicit about those (including safer sex practices). Let your partner know of any bad triggers (and good ones too, of course!), and how they can help you if you accidentally hit a snag.

Remember, the point of negotiating is not only to establish limits, but also to explore possibilities. Try sharing some of your fantasies - both what's happening, and the feelings behind them. Do you want to feel claimed, humiliated and empowered to put yourself back together, like a wanton slut? Negotiation is something that's necessary, but it can also be fun. It can be a dance. It can be a seduction. It can be foreplay. Think about what each of you can offer the other, and build on each other's desires.

If you're feeling really unsure about negotiating, considering bringing someone along with you. They can negotiate for you - just make sure you're very clear about your limits with them, or simply observe and add in as needed. Some people use mentors or protectors for this, but you could also ask a friend who simply has more experience with negotiating than you.

*[possible roleplaying exercises with the group]*