

Getting into the BDSM Community

By roo-roo

I wrote this a while back. Hopefully some of the people who are new to this or looking to get involved with the local scene will find it helpful. It can get a bit preachy, and not everyone will agree with every word in here. Still, I think it's useful as a starting point toward introspection and action. It's written from a female-dominant / male-submissive point of view, but feel free to tweak things out to your own preferred arrangement as you read it.

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Lots of people are curious about their local scene. Others spend their time searching online, running into countless idealistic role-players, yearning to meet people who actually do this in real life. So I've put together this little how-to for people who want to get involved in the local bdsm community.

Finding the scene

One way of finding your local scene is to google "bdsm" along with the name of the nearest big city. If that doesn't work, try "munch" along with the name of the city. Or "leather" with the city name. This should hopefully return something, depending on where in the world you are; I wouldn't count on finding anything if you live in Tehran or Saudi Arabia. You could even ask in message boards/forums if anyone knows anything about a scene in your city. Keep in mind that small towns generally don't have any bdsm events; you'll probably have to travel to a larger city.

Fetlife makes things much easier. All you need to do is type in the name of the city, and it'll give you a list of groups and events in your area. Just don't start randomly messaging people. That rarely works out well. Get in the groups, join the conversations, and go to events.

What to expect once you get there

A munch is simply a bunch of bdsmers getting together for dinner. Most munches don't have assigned seating or protocol to follow. It's just dinner. Munches are usually held at regular restaurants in an area separate from the rest of the customers. While each munch is different, around here, most munches average between 15 and 60 people.

Don't go in saying things like, "Where are all the parties at?" If people like you, they'll invite you in due time. They have to get to know you first. It's okay to ask about public parties though. It's generally considered rude to talk about private parties, unless everyone within earshot has been invited.

My biggest obstacle was making progress against my shyness. Just walking into the first munch was a nerve-wracking experience.....but well worth it. (On the way to my first munch, I was screaming the Oscar Meyer Weiner song in my car, to try to calm my nerves.) Before going to the munch though, I looked at the munch's website and e-mailed with some basic questions, like what people normally wore to these things. The person I ended up talking with was very friendly and understanding.

Speaking of what to wear- munches are usually pretty informal, and people generally don't wear fetish wear since most are held in restaurants. Jeans and a nice top are fine. It's not a formal occasion. Basic black with blue jeans is a safe bet. If you're in doubt, ask someone first. Be clean.

Workshops/demos are similar. There's no need to dress up. Wear what you'd wear if you were going on a night out with friends.

Parties and clubs sometimes have their own dress codes. It's a smart move to try to find out ahead of time if there is a dress code and what it entails. Ask around or e-mail one of the organizers.

Workshops are generally pretty informal too, just like munches. Some are more hands-on, such as in the case of a bondage workshop. Others are more of a lecture or roundtable discussion. Participation is rarely required.

At a party or other event, don't touch peoples' toys (or people in general) without asking first. If people are playing, give them plenty of space. Don't crowd them; you may get flogged in the face. If you need to talk to someone else while there's a scene going on, either take your conversation out of the play area or whisper quietly so as not to disturb the scene.

The approach (or how to avoid coming across as an online wanker)

Once I started getting into the conversations, people were naturally curious about me, and asked questions. It was a bit uncomfortable at first, but I expected that since I'm on the shy side. This is one place where being yourself is really important. If I'd taken the cliché approach of "I'm submissive, so I'll do whatever you're into; I have no interests of my own", well, that's just plain boring. And very fake. We've all got interests and fantasies, and it's important to be open about them if we expect to live them. None of us are mind readers, whether dominant or submissive. Just because someone is a dominant woman, that doesn't mean we're compatible, so it's important to be honest about our interests and expectations. Even if you're submissive, it's still important to go after what you want; if you don't, you won't be happy.

Be you. I'm honest about not being into protocol, ritual, structure, etc. These things are pretty popular among some dominants.....but if I pretended to be into them, not only would I feel like a hypocrite, but I wouldn't be happy in the relationship either. Online, it's common to see weak, obsequious, sniveling little twits who think that agreeing with everything impresses dommes. Invariably, there are a handful of online dommes who will go for this type. Being that way in the face-to-face world won't get you far, though. Doormats attract abusers. Coming across as too eager to please often reeks of desperation. If you have a life, if you're confident and strong, these are qualities that many dommes find interesting. We are all equals until we agree to some form of power exchange, and it's important to treat everyone as such.

One thing I continually keep in my head is that I'm deserving of respect. Many subs forget this. They think it's their "place" to be treated badly or to be unfulfilled, since it's supposedly all about the domme's desires. Bullshit. An unhappy sub won't stay around long; our desires are equally important. I

make it clear that I feel that way early on when there's someone I'm interested in. If she agrees that equality and d/s don't have to be mutually exclusive, that's a good sign. This can even show up in little things. For example, if a domme repeatedly cuts me off in conversation and is nasty to the waitstaff, why should I tolerate that? It's rude, and I deserve better. You can pick up all sorts of things from your casual interactions with people.

It can be hard to have the confidence to say "this is who I am, and if you don't like it, then move on." But if I didn't do that, I'd be going from one lousy relationship to another. If someone doesn't accept what I give, too bad. This is really another way of saying, "be honest". If you lie about who you are or what you're into, you'll be found out, and you'll be worse off.

Seeing dommes as actual people (and expecting the same from them) is a must. We've all got faults and weaknesses. Don't see the dommes as simply dommes. They wear other hats too. Maybe she's a doctor, a mom, a diabetic, or any number of things. Ignoring those other facets and seeing her only as a domme is insulting. Likewise, her ignoring the other aspects of who you are is equally insulting.

Don't assume that there's an automatic power exchange. Just because she's a dominant woman and you're submissive, that doesn't mean she gives her consent and vice-versa. Don't call her by some lofty title, as that assumes familiarity. And don't kneel down and start kissing her boots. If you want to play, just ask. If she says no, accept her answer and don't badger her.

Realize that finding someone shouldn't be your only reason for getting into the scene. I've made tons of wonderful friends there, and continue to have lots of great times with them.....not to mention casual play with friends. If I had ignored (or been cold to) everyone who didn't seem "useful" to me, I wouldn't have many friends. Keep that in mind when you get to talking with people.

About the same time that I got into the local scene, I started looking around on different message boards online. What I found shocked me. There were so many people, domme and sub alike, who had totally unrealistic, overly idealistic expectations. All "real subs" are expected to be into TPE and cuckolding, do all the housework, and do all sorts of things they don't want to do. That might work for an online role-play, but being miserable in a flesh-and-blood relationship just isn't a way I want to live. A lot of people, especially online, take a "more is better" approach to submission. Isn't personal satisfaction more important than playing subbier-than-thou? Submission should cause joy, not agony. We've all got our own particular style of submission; it took a lot of introspection and experimentation to find my way. It'll probably take the same for you to find yours. Be patient, and be yourself. Don't believe all the propaganda you read online about how "real" d/s relationships are supposed to work. Many of them were written by guys typing with one hand or people who have no real-world experience with d/s.

There is an element of luck as well; even if someone does everything perfectly, there's no guarantee they'll meet somebody compatible. It's just like in the vanilla world. But if you don't try, you may miss out.