

Safety in the Scene

By roo-roo

Safety is a vital part of what we do, unless you're the type who enjoys not having all their limbs and/or a pulse. This is a guide intended for new people, though it still very much applies to those who have been around for years as well. It's by no means a comprehensive writing, but it will provide food for thought for anyone considering getting involved or playing with someone. I tried to whittle it down to something relatively brief while keeping the main points clear. If anyone has anything to add, feel free to comment.

Thank you to all who contributed (and will contribute) their thoughts to this guide. Your input may help someone avoid a nasty experience.

- Be careful with your personal information. Don't post details like your real name, address, or place of employment online. This applies in person too; when going to a munch or other event, no one needs to know where you live or where you work. It's best to keep that information to a few close friends initially. Same goes for your real name; it's perfectly acceptable to go by an alias or by your fetlife screen name. But when you're meeting up with someone to talk about playing, it's a red flag if they won't give you their name at that point.
- Before playing with someone new, ask around. Our bdsm community is an interconnected network, and if someone is unsafe, word will spread. Make sure you ask multiple people about whoever you're considering playing with; one person's opinion and/or experiences may not be enough to form an accurate picture.
- If you're curious about a certain type of edgy or dangerous play, educate yourself first. Read as much as you can and attend some demos if they're available. Talk to local kinksters who have done it. They may be able to recommend someone very skilled to learn from as well.
- When meeting the other person, meet in a public place. If possible, you can also play in a public place, like a dungeon or play party.
- "Trust your instincts" is good advice to follow, but be aware that if you've recently gotten out of a relationship or had some other heavy emotional event, your instincts might not be too trustworthy for a while. Also, if you have a history of repeatedly getting involved with the wrong type of people, again, your instincts may not work as well as you think.
- Don't be afraid to say no. Even if you identify as a slave or submissive, you still have rights and limits. You don't have to do anything you're uncomfortable with. You don't owe the other person anything, and you won't be seen as any less submissive if you refuse to do everything the other person wants to do. Everything is negotiable- sexual contact, kissing, nudity, bondage, pain, humiliation, etc. You can end the scene at any time. All of this applies to tops/dominants as well. If you don't want to do a certain type of activity, you're not obligated to do it.
- You have limits. Expect them to be respected. But you have to do your part- communicate them. Make sure the other person is very clear on your limits and that you're just as clear on theirs.
- Be selective. You don't have to play with the first person who comes along just because you're submissive and they're dominant (or vice-versa.) There will be others.

- Sub frenzy (and the equivalent on the top/dom side of things) is a real thing. It's easy to get caught up in the kid-in-a-candy-shop mentality and want to try everything, right now, as hard as possible. It's better to walk away from a scene wanting more than to walk away from it regretting having gone too far. Take your time. You'll have plenty of opportunities to try all the things you're curious about.
- Know yourself, and be honest about what you need and what you are hoping to get from the experience. It's difficult to know for sure what you like when you're new, so be honest about your level of experience, and know that things may not feel exactly as you expected them to.
- If you try something that doesn't feel like you expected it to (physically or emotionally) you don't have to tough it out. You can end that particular activity or end the scene.
- Be up front about any emotional triggers, land mines, and medical conditions. If you need to take medicine at a certain time, let the other person know ahead of time. You can't expect a person to know these things if you don't tell them. Make sure the person you're playing with has emergency contact info for you in case you should have a medical emergency.
- Have a safe call. This is someone you trust who you arrange a phone call with at a certain time. The person on the other end should know what to do if you don't call at the appointed time, whether it be call the police, come over to where you are, or something else entirely. You can also use a prearranged code word in the conversation that means you need help. Be sure the person on the other end knows it's a commitment and knows exactly what to do if you don't call or if you say your code word. Make sure you know the name of whoever you're playing with (not just their fetlife name) as well as the address you'll be at and communicate that to your safe call person ahead of time.
- It's always a solid idea to know cpr and first aid regardless of whether you're a top or bottom. Hospitals and fire departments offer regular classes on these topics. There are also plenty of resources online where you can learn about this. First aid kits are inexpensive and can be found in most general stores and drug stores. Just check the dates on any medications inside to make sure they haven't expired.