

## Negotiate and Enjoy

### Your/Their Experience

It is important to be clear about your own knowledge and experience. Certainly scenes are a way of practising and consolidating your experience. However it may be prudent to alert your partner that you are engaging in an activity in which you are inexperienced so that they can provide appropriate feedback.

It is also important to establish the level of experience of your partner. A novice top can learn a great deal from an experienced sub and vice versa.

### Your/Their Needs, Wants and Limits

This is an excellent means by which to determine what you are, and are not, looking for in a scene.

Needs relates to activities that must happen in a scene for it to be worthwhile for you.

Wants relates to activities that you would like to happen or would like to explore in a scene.

Limits relate to activities that you are not interested in at all.

Everyone should generate a list of needs, wants and limits as this provides an excellent basis for scene negotiation.

### Stop or safe words

A word or phrase which is agreed between both parties and used in a scene to **stop** or **pause** the scene.”

Good stop words are:

- Memorable.
- Simple.
- Not related to words used in the scene.
- Agreed.

Some examples of good stop words are:

- The top's first name.
- "Red".
- "Banana".

Other widely-used systems include:-

- **Traffic lights:**
  - **Red** - Stop the scene immediately.
  - **Amber** - I am getting close to using the Stop word.
  - **Green** - Everything is okay.
- **Three grunts.** If you are gagged three short and distinct grunts is an alternative, or you can be given an item to drop (such as a dog ball with a bell inside).
- **The Sliding Scale.** The top asks the bottom to indicate their feelings on a scale of 1-10, 1 being "fine" and 10 being "at my limit".

### Silent alarms

- Silent alarms need to be arranged before a scene. Tops should be proactive and ask their subs to arrange a silent alarm as part of pre-scene negotiation.

- You and your silent alarm need to consider what will happen if you don't contact them. Will they call you or come and find you? What happens if they cannot get hold of you, and how will they know where you are?
- At what point will they call the police? Are you and they prepared to explain the circumstances and deal with any embarrassment?
- It is good practice to tell the person you are playing with that you have set up a silent alarm. No reasonable person will object to letting you make phone call at an agreed time.
- You may want to include a codeword in the call to prevent you from being forced to make the call under duress.
- Silent alarms are for tops as well as subs: a sub can "turn" on a top, or the top could have an accident or medical problem.
- You **MUST** remember to call! Set an alarm clock if necessary to remind you.

### Medical issues

Some medical issues that could be relevant to a scene:-

- **False teeth or contact lenses:** Check for these before the scene! These are not only used by older people!
- **Cramp or muscle pain:** Cramp is due to reduced blood flow. This can be caused by muscles which have not been used for a long time, and are then subject to heavy exertion or poor circulation due to bondage being too tight or being held in a position for too long. Remove any restraint and get them to move and rub the affected area.
- **Numbness or pins & needles:** Is caused by pressure on a nerve when it runs close to the surface of the body. Remove any restraint and get them to rub the affected area.
- **Hyperventilation:** Is usually caused by exertion or fear. Loosen any restraints and get them to breathe with you, and take slow, deep breaths.
- **Fainting/blackouts:** You need to restore the blood supply to the brain. Loosen any restraints and either sit them down and place their head between their knees or lie them down and slightly raise their feet.
- **Medical conditions:-** Heart, lung and circulation conditions can affect a player's ability in a scene. Some conditions require regular medication, ie diabetes, HIV, etc.

It is important to discuss health issues before a scene. In an emergency dial 111.

### Why is scene negotiation important?

- This gives both players the confidence that the scene can be stopped if they feel they are being pushed outside their comfort zone. It also starts to establish trust, which helps people relax with one another.
- If possible, meet in neutral space beforehand to discuss these issues. This gets the pre-scene negotiation covered so the scene can start immediately on arrival on the day. Many players find it preferable to go straight into the action.
- Don't assume that the other person's understanding of BDSM etiquette or the conventions you follow or expect are the same as yours.
- Discuss how you want to interact with each other, eg will the sub show respect to the top and call them "Sir/Madam"? Will the top order the sub

around? Or will it be a more “equal” encounter? If the sub displeases the top for whatever reason, will there be consequences?

- If the top wants to punish the sub, it helps if they have thought about possible transgressions (e.g. arriving late) and suitable responses in advance. This helps ensure the punishment is in proportion to the offence.
- The top should have an outline plan for the scene (consider writing it down so you can refer to it). This should cover the range of activities will be incorporated into the scene and roughly which order they will take place and where. It is annoying to tie someone up and then realise they are in the wrong position or wrong place for what you want to do to them.
- The plan should occupy more time than is expected to be available. Items can always be dropped, but it is harder to think of something to do on the spur of the moment if things go quicker than expected, or if you have to abandon activities due to unforeseen circumstances.
- The top should work out beforehand which equipment they needs and have it ready. Hunting for equipment looks amateurish. Remember some equipment (hoods, manacles etc) needs to fit the sub.
- The top must remember to have safety equipment (safety scissors, bolt cutters etc) handy.
- The top should check the locations they will be using, for temperature, drafts, privacy, light level and the possibility of being overheard.
- The top should ensure they are competent to perform any activity they wish to include, ie if rope bondage, then practice knots or rope work beforehand. If you are a novice top, keep it simple.
- Tops should not get over-ambitious with a new or novice sub. Don't try and take them too far too soon.
- Have condoms and lube available if necessary.
- Both parties should set up a silent alarm.
- The top should plan for emergencies: have a first aid kit handy, know where the nearest hospital with a casualty department is, and know their postcode (to assist the emergency services in locating them).
- Discuss whether photos or video will be taken, and if so who will be given copies.

### **At the Start of the Scene**

The start of a scene can be nerve-wracking (but a great turn-on) for both top and sub. A novice top may worry their inexperience will show and he will make a mess of it. A novice sub may worry about what is going to happen to them.

- The sub should turn up on time. Take the address with you and if necessary take a map and a phone number.
- Get the sub to call the top as they get near to the address. This gives the top warning that the sub is on their way, and gives the top a chance to give them any last minute instructions.
- If a sub is visiting a novice top, it helps if they complies with any instructions and is not deliberately “difficult”. This can destroy a top's confidence.
- If the top is experienced and the sub is a novice, it can help if the top gives the sub some reassurance. This can be done while still retaining authority

and control so the mood is not broken (e.g. by hand squeezing, or verbally). Ask if the sub has set up a silent alarm, and if not, why not?

- The top needs to establish the correct mood as soon as the scene starts. If they are supposed to be authoritarian then they need to take control immediately and not engage in small talk. Attitude is everything in making a first impression.
- Getting the scene off to a good start is very important. If the scene starts badly it can be difficult or impossible to get it back on track.
- Blindfold the sub early on (if they have agreed to it). This allows the top to work at their own pace without the pressure of the sub's gaze, and allows them to correct any mistakes (e.g. in the rope work) without the sub seeing them. It may also heighten the sub's sense of anticipation, pleasure or fear.
- Remind the sub that they need to give feedback!

### **Progressing a scene**

- The top should monitor the sub's body language at all times. This gives valuable information about whether or not the sub is enjoying something and how difficult they are finding an activity.
- Even an experienced top can misinterpret an unfamiliar sub's feedback. Each sub may respond differently to the same stimulation.
- If an activity is not going well then the top should consider moving on to something else. They need to be flexible.
- The top should think about what feelings they want to produce in the sub. Blindfolding, stripping and restraining someone in quick succession will be more intense than slowly building up. Bondage does not have to be fast.
- The top should take their time. A restrained sub will hopefully be enjoying the bondage. It is not necessary for the top to be working on the sub all the time. The top can use these pauses to rest or to plan their next move.
- As a rule, the tighter the bondage, the shorter the time the sub can stay in that position. Any position can become a stress position if the sub is in it for long enough.
- The top needs to consider the sub's physical state. If they are naked then they may be feeling the cold more than the top. He may be getting tired or thirsty. Have water and straws available if necessary.
- Playing music can establish mood. Longer pieces without distinct lyrics tend to work better.
- The top needs to keep an eye on the time. Allow time to end the scene in a planned manner and avoid having the sub stranded, having missed the last train.

### **Closing the Scene**

Ending or closing a scene is one of the most important factors in helping to make sure that both parties will remember the scene with satisfaction later.

### **Planned ending**

## Before

- The top needs to avoid suddenness in ending the scene. They should give the sub plenty of warning that the scene will be ending soon. They can do this by:
  - Telling the sub the scene will end when a particular piece of music has finished playing.
  - Ending the scene with a familiar activity, having told the sub that this will be the last item.
  - Telling the sub the scene will end the scene soon, but they want them to do something first (take 10 more strokes, cum, etc).
  - Setting a pre-determined finish time, and telling the sub that an alarm clock will ring 10 minutes before the end of the scene.
- The sub needs to give appropriate feedback to the top so that the top does not end the scene too early or too late.

## During

- The top should restore all the sub's senses and untie them, while maintaining a simple, undemanding dialogue with them.
- The top should ensure the sub is kept warm enough, using a blanket if necessary.
- The top should not expect the sub to give much feedback on the scene at this stage, as they are probably still processing their experiences.
- The sub may well just want to be hugged and held.

## After

- Both parties may benefit from a snack to elevate blood sugar and a drink to re-hydrate.
- Either or both parties may want a bath or shower – this can be shared if desired.
- Both parties are likely to be tired, and may just want to sleep.
- Both top and sub should remember that the other party may not yet be ready to talk about the scene, but should be ready to be supportive if required.
- Good post-scene etiquette is for the top to call the sub within a few days of a scene to make sure that everything is okay. The sub should contact the top if they do not hear from them.

## Unplanned ending

Explain that sometimes a scene may end when the safe/stop word is used.

- If a sub uses a stop word, this could mean either that they are finding a specific activity too much to handle, or that they want the scene to end completely. The top needs to find out which by acknowledging the use of the stop word and checking in with the sub. This must be done *immediately* in case the sub is having a serious problem, e.g. with breathing.
- Tops and subs can help this process by discussing the use of different stop words before a scene starts.
- Under some circumstances, e.g. if the sub was simply finding a particular activity too intense, or had an unrelated problem such as cramp, then it may be possible for the scene to continue, if both parties agree.

- However if the sub does not wish the scene to continue, the top **must** respect their decision.
- Both parties have the right to change their minds about engaging in the scene at any time. Neither person should pressurise the other into continuing or denigrate the other for exercising this right.
- When a stop word is used, this can cause both the top and the sub to feel different emotions. The top may feel guilty that he has gone too far, or angry that the sub has interrupted the action. The sub may feel guilty that he is spoiling the top's enjoyment, or angry that the top did not stop before the safe word was used.
- If either party is feeling angry or distressed, it may be possible to resolve these feelings with dialogue. This may need to happen sometime after the scene is over and feelings have cooled.

**In summary:**

- Respect and honour your partner's limits. Respect and honour your own limits. Respect means nobody gets put down or belittled, top or sub.