

Pain for Pleasure: An Intimate Peek at the BDSM Lifestyle

By Tanya Procyshyn



If you're wowed by whips, captivated with collars or enchanted by chains there's a good chance you know that the letters "BDSM" are more than just a random sampling of the alphabet. To enlighten those who prefer to keep it strictly vanilla in the bedroom, BDSM is an acronym that encompasses a variety of sexual kinks — bondage/discipline, domination/submission and sadism/masochism. Though most people fail to see the sex appeal of a firm flogging, the BDSM lifestyle is all about blurring the boundaries between pain and pleasure for the purpose of reaching new heights of erotic ecstasy.

While it's true that many practices of the BDSM lifestyle may seem practically cruel in a non-sexual context, many people find that a little pain can be exhilarating when administered in a safe and consensual setting by someone they trust. The practice of experiencing sexual gratification from the infliction of pain is the "M" in BDSM — masochism, and its counterpart is sadism — experiencing pleasure from inflicting pain upon others. In the prudish past, sadism and masochism were regarded as psychological disorders by most psychiatrists, but more recently the consensus has changed to a view that sadism or masochism are only disorders if they impair normal day-to-day functioning.

As BDSM requires an inflictor and an inflictee of any suffering, power relations play an important factor in the lifestyle. Generally, the receiver of the BDSM-related activities is considered to be submissive to the person doling out the punishment. The dominant person in a BDSM relationship is often referred to as a "dom" or "top," and may insist upon being called Master or Mistress by their "sub" or "bottom." While people may identify solely as a submissive or a dominant, those who enjoy reversing roles with their partner are commonly termed "switches."

Along with the power relationships in BDSM-related play comes the fetishization of collars — a tangible symbol of control and a staple of any sex toy store. For a couple in a long-term BDSM relationship, the sub may be said to be “collared” to their mistress or master, with the exceptionally dedicated wearing their collar both in and outside of the bedroom. The significance of collars in the lifestyle also ties in with the first letter of the BDSM acronym — bondage. A collar, or ropes, scarves, spreader bars, stocks, harnesses or handcuffs, may all be used in BDSM as methods of physical restraint. Bondage is likely the most mainstream component of the BDSM fetishes, with some American studies of sexual behavior indicating that as many as half of all adults report finding the idea of light bondage to be erotic.

The final element of BDSM is discipline, for which the method and intensity can vary greatly depending on individual preference and tolerance for pain. For the mildly masochistic, common techniques include spanking, applying hot wax and the calculated attachment of clothespins or clamps. Discipline need not solely be physical and may involve acts of humiliation, like being lead on a leash while walking on all fours, or a combination of the physical and the humiliating, such as a spanking in public.

Due to the obvious risks involved, it is essential that bondage and discipline are only practiced in consensual settings with a trusted partner, and a common precaution is the agreement upon a “safe word” before any BDSM-related play begins. A safe word is a codeword or phrase not typically uttered during sex that can be used at anytime by any party involved to indicate that they want to stop. For example, among true BDSM enthusiasts, a bad safe word would be “No, no! Stop!” while a good one might be “orange.”

If you find that your interests have been aroused by any aspect of the BDSM lifestyle, you’re in luck, as Winnipeg is a city that caters to the kinky. For a city of a humble size, Winnipeg is home to a vibrant and extremely active BDSM community. Whether you simply seek more information or are looking to meet the complementary dom to your sub, there exist both Manitoba and Winnipeg BDSM email-based groups, and their contact information can be found through any online search engine. While both groups organize social activities, the ultimate Winnipeg BDSM event is the Black and Blue Ball.

Occurring once every two months, the Black and Blue Ball recently celebrated its 10th anniversary as Winnipeg’s premiere fetish event. A celebration of all things erotic, the Black and Blue Ball offers demonstrations of BDSM-related play, and local vendors selling sexual paraphernalia, and serves as a delightfully sinful setting to meet a diverse group of like-minded people. The next ball is scheduled for December 3 and full details (plus plenty of links to local BDSM resources) are available at www.blackandblueball.ca. One rule at the Black and Blue

Ball is that cameras are forbidden, making it an event you genuinely must experience firsthand to believe.

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Editor's Note: At the time of the publication of this article "The Ball" was known as the Black and Blue Ball, but since that time it has evolved to simply "The Ball".

The website has changed to reflect this growth and is now known as *www.TheBall.ca*