

schoolgirl during exam week? It's OK to let your imagination run wild. Let the inmates interrogate the guards, the altar boys bugger the priests, the martyrs lead the lions around on leashes.

Although people sometimes use "Top" and "Dominant" interchangeably (either from lack of understand-

ing or as part of a verbal shortcut among those "in the know"), they do have important practical and semantic differences regarding power exchange.

Generally, a Top is someone who engages in play without an emphasis on power exchange. Partners are essentially equals in and out of scene.

A Dominant, however, expands the role to include at least some degree of psychological and/or sexual control, thus creating a hierarchical play relationship. Some seek partners for "real life," 24-hour, seven-days-a-week Dominant/submissive relationships.

*"It has a complete and total effect on my choice. At this point in time I am completely dedicated to this 24/7 lifestyle. No other relationship vessel has been strong enough to contain the types of physical and energetic exchanges I seek in intimate, sexual long-term relationships."*

—palomino

The list of kinky elements that go together well includes collars and leashes, blindfolds and nipple clamps, Tops and bottoms, Dominants and submissives, Masters/Mistresses and slaves. Each complements the other, and the human interactions are vital to one another's existence. Without the bottom, the Top has no one with whom to play. Without the submissive, the Dominant's sense of balance and security is incomplete.

Just as the Top or Dominant generally performs an action (whipping, tickling, ordering, restraining), the bottom receives the action. As with their counterparts, bottoms tend to be more sensation-driven and engage in play fairly free of power dynamics. Submissives, on the other hand, are engaged in play where agreed-upon levels of control and power are surrendered and where the mutually consensual imbalance is explored, enjoyed or even celebrated.

Now, this all makes B/D/S/M sound nice and neat and well organized, doesn't it? Much like the new "queer" identity emergence, though, the pot gets a little mixed.

Many New Guard players rock the binary model by adopting the designation of "switch." Like the bisexual, the switch knows what he or she wants: everything.

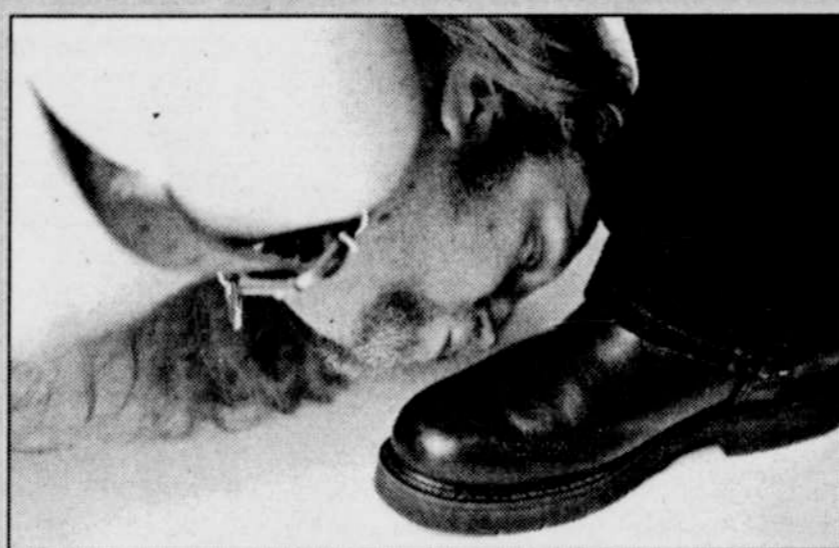
A switch may decide whether to take on the Top/Dominant or bottom/submissive role based on the type of play, the gender or age of the partner, the emotional or sexual dynamics between partners, or other personally meaningful and mutually agreed-upon reasons. It's all fair game.

*"S/M is an important aspect of my spirituality. On this path I have found ecstasy, surrender, connection and transcendence.... The techniques we use in S/M—various forms of intense sensation, sensory deprivation, sexual ecstasy and power exchange—have been used for sacred purposes by human beings around the world and throughout history."*

—Stella

In simple terms, there are those who play for the body rush and those who play for the mind fuck—and each can serve as a gateway to profound emotional or spiritual insight. Any given scene, of course, can include a combination of both forms of stimulation.

For instance, there are those who simply enjoy the sensation of giving or receiving a whipping, spanking, body restriction or modification, and there are those who find bliss in service, ver-



## More sir!

Need a little more information?  
Here's a list of books to get you started.

- Beneath the Skins* by Ivo Dominguez Jr.
- The Bottoming Book* by Dossie Easton and Catherine A. Liszt
- Come Hither* by Gloria Brame
- Different Loving* by Gloria Brame, et al.
- Encyclopedia of Unusual Sex Practices* by Brenda Love
- The Kiss of the Whip* by Jim Prezwalski
- Learning the Ropes* by Race Bannon
- Leathermen's Handbook 1 and 2* by Larry Townsend
- Leatherfolk* edited by Mark Thompson
- Leathersex* by Joseph Bean
- The Loving Dominant* by John Warren, Ph.D.
- The Only Reason I Mention This* by Daddy Bob Allen
- Screw the Roses, Send Me the Thorns* by Philip Miller and Molly Devon
- The Sexually Dominant Woman* by Lady Green
- Sir! More Sir! The Joy of S & M* by Master Jackson
- SM 101* by Jay Wiseman
- SM Classics* edited by Susan Wright
- Ties That Bind* by Guy Baldwin
- The Topping Book* by Dossie Easton and Catherine A. Liszt
- Urban Aboriginals* by Geoff Mains

bal humiliation or role-playing. But most scenes include some blending of the two.

For example, one might enjoy both the charm of cross-dressing and the discomfort of restrictive garments. Likewise, an eagerness to please or to administer corporal discipline combined with a student/teacher scenario blends the two extremes nicely. The "rape" or ravishment fantasy, familiar even to theoretically "vanilla" dreamers, is another clear example of combining the best of both play practices.

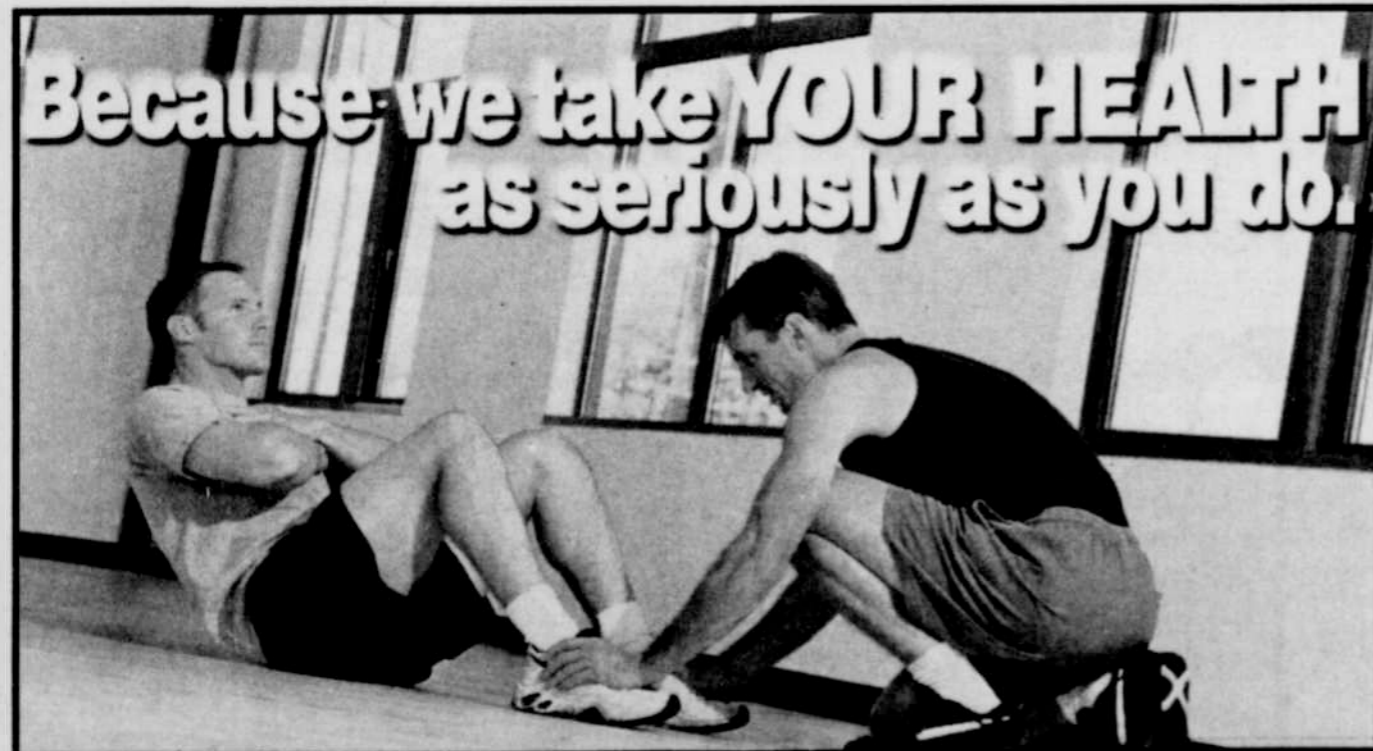
If one concept sits at the heart of what most people consider to be healthy B/D/S/M—whether it's a single sensation play scene or a 24/7 lifestyle D/s relationship—it's the concept of "informed consent." Without informed consent, one no longer engages in what commonly is referred to as safe, sane and consensual B/D/S/M. Instead, one begins to engage in abuse.

Within the B/D/S/M context, informed consent occurs within a process called "negotiation." Something like playing a game of kinky 20 Questions, this is a "getting to know you" period during which people determine what exactly they want to do and—

even more importantly—what they do not want to do. People often give thought to what they want to do during a play session—what toys to use, what music to play, what to wear—but not a lot of time is dedicated to the end of a scene. Once the negotiated activities are completed, it's time to put away the toys and go home. Wham, bam, thank you ma'am.

Aftercare, however, is as vital as negotiation. Aftercare is the attentive and affectionate process of returning to one's daily reality after experiencing a potentially powerful event. Aftercare can be as simple as asking how your partner is feeling physically

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