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**SAVAGE LOVE** *WORKING THE KINKS OUT*  
 BY DAN SAVAGE



*I'm what was once quaintly called a "woman of a certain age" who started reading your column to broaden my horizons. As a result, some curiosities peeped their heads over the boundaries of my once happily repressed existence. I summoned the courage to join an online BDSM dating site. I got a response almost immediately from a man who decided to fill me in on how things worked. He proceeded to tell me my name would henceforth be Sub, advised me that he was to be addressed as His Majesty King Something, and ordered me to phone him. This was too much, too fast, and too weird. I gave him what I thought was a plausible excuse for my decision not to proceed to avoid hurting his feelings. He wouldn't take no for an answer. I tried blocking him, but he seemed to have several identities on the same site. I deactivated my account. So now I'm in a bit of a quandary as to where to seek out other options—preferably options that are safer and not so ritualistically restrictive.*

**Fear Of Flying**

"When folks first decide to explore a curiosity in kink or BDSM, one of the things I let them know is that this loose band of variegated kinky types—the kink community—is NOT a utopia of ultimate sexual enlightenment," said Mollena Williams, a kinky author, activist, and blogger. "The kink community is a microcosm of the broader society, from the lowest common denominator to the crème de la crème."

Sadly, FOF, it sounds like one of your first interactions was with a LowCom, not a CrèmeDe. "I wish I could say her experience is unique," said Williams. "But it is not. The same creeps, jerks, and assholes on standard dating sites are on BDSM-centric sites. And some will utilize the trappings of consensual kink to non-consensually slime people."

What Williams means by "slime," FOF, is "manipulate, intimidate, and potentially abuse." Creepy assholes like His Majesty King Something will seek out younger and/or less experienced subs like you, because older and/or more experienced subs are more likely to recognize his behavior for the red-flag sliminess it is—and older and/or more experienced subs would tell him to fuck off without feeling obligated to spare his feelings.

So what can you do? "Block the trolls," said Williams, "and seek out the awesome folks who are also hanging out at sites like FetLife.com, ALT.com, iTaboo.com, and BDSMfriendbook.com. A kink-friendly profile on a non-kink site is another option. I met my current dominant partner on OkCupid because my profile reveals that I happen to be a big old pervert. That caught his eye. Kinky folks are everywhere!"

You also have offline options, FOF. "She can find local events by checking out Caryl's BDSM Page (drkde-syre.com) or by joining FetLife and searching events in her area," said Williams. "She can attend munches, which are nonsexual social meet and greets, and classes are good places to meet people who are experienced." Getting to know kinksters face-to-face doesn't offer 100 percent protection from creeps, "but it's a great way to get feedback, recommendations, and ever-important warnings. Essentially, dating in the kink world is no different than dating in the default world. You don't have to drop your drawers because you're told to. You don't have to spank someone because they're insisting they NEED it. Always meet on an equal footing first. Get to know potential partners and THEN decide if you've got enough in common to proceed." Two suggestions from me: Get a copy of *Playing Well with Others: Your Field Guide to Discovering, Exploring and Navigating the Kink, Leather and BDSM Communities* by Mollena Williams and Lee Harrington, and follow Mollena Williams on Twitter @Mollena.

*I'm a 30-year-old bi girl and have been with my girlfriend for nearly 10 years. We discovered a love of BDSM together and we've had lots of fun exploring. Until now. I am a natural sub, but my girlfriend asked to switch and for me to dominate her. I have tried to do this half a dozen times, but afterward—or sometimes during a scene—she tells me it isn't working. She says that it's not about my actions but about my "tone." Hearing this kills my ladyboner, and the scene fizzles and dies. It's gotten to the point where I'm wondering if I should bother anymore if I can never get my "tone" right. I want to please her, and that usually keeps me trying over and over, but... I don't know. I feel guilty and depressed because I can't seem to return the pleasure she gave me when our roles were reversed.*

**Giving Up On BDSM**

Either your technique and style are both lousy—maybe every fiber of your being is (subconsciously) screaming "I hate this role" during a scene—or your girlfriend is one of those BDSM switches who has a difficult time submitting to someone she knows, loves, wakes up next to every morning, gets into arguments with about bills, etc. It might be better if she subbed for someone else, GUOB, while continuing to dominate you.

*I am married to a man who is into BDSM. I am happy to do lighter stuff, but I am not interested in squeezing into an uncomfortable corset and using a flogger on him. It doesn't turn me on. So I gave him permission to visit a pro. It seemed like a good idea at the time. The pressure was off me, he was getting what he needed, our relationship and sex life improved. But I had no idea how much pros cost! He has been spending hundreds of dollars each month on his kinks! He has been going to see a pro twice a month and spends \$200+ on each visit! I was shocked! I expected that he would go a few times a year and that these "sessions" would cost \$100 a pop. We are supposed to be saving to buy a home! He spent more going to his pro in December than he did on Christmas! I asked him to cut back and go see someone cheaper, and he became angry and defensive. He accused me of going back on our agreement. I know he reads your column. Please help! What is a reasonable number of times to see a pro? What is a reasonable rate? What about a couple's budget and plans for the future?*

**He Spent More Than I Thought**

Two hundred dollars a session—\$200 an hour—isn't an unreasonable rate when you consider a professional dom's overhead and fixed costs. Corsets, floggers, bondage gear, and dungeon spaces do not come cheap. But unless money is no object and/or you're single, blowing \$400+ a month on visits to a pro dom is unreasonable and unfair. That's \$4,800+ a year, which could go a long way toward a down payment on a house. Since there aren't many pro doms out there who work for \$100 an hour—or many partners as understanding as you—your husband should think about cutting way the fuck back, getting a second job, or winning the lottery. But here's something for you to think about, HSMTII: You say all those sessions with a professional dominant have improved your relationship and your sex life. If your husband were spending \$100 a week to see a shrink—\$5,200 a year—and you were seeing those kinds of results, would you object?

Sports talk with Dan's brother Billy at [savagelovecast.com](http://savagelovecast.com).

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