

KINK & BDSM

What's It All About?

WHAT IS KINK?

Kink is an umbrella term that refers to a variety of sexual and non-sexual fantasies, fetishes and activities. Kink is often contrasted with "straight" or "vanilla" sexuality and behaviors. A fetish is sexual attraction to objects, body parts or situations not conventionally seen as sexual. Kink is also used to refer to one's unique or specific sexual propensities, such "I have a kink for high heels".

The acronym BDSM is a compound abbreviation.

Bondage & **D**iscipline (B/D)

Dominance & **s**ubmission (D&s)

+ **S**ado **M**asochism (SM)

BDSM

WHAT IS BDSM?

BDSM is also many things. Some BDSM activities may or may not include sexual experiences. In the broadest sense, BDSM usually incorporates some form of restraint (bondage), pressure, sensation or elements of power exchange (non-erotic and erotic) such as dominance and submission. Some people do not associate kink with sexuality at all. You may find that some people object to the term BDSM which was derived in part from a mainstream medical model which has stigmatized these behaviors.

As with all sexuality, kink and BDSM are consensual.

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WHO IS KINKY?

Some studies report that at least 9% of the US population has engaged in some kind of kink sexuality at least once. **ANYONE CAN BE KINKY.**

How do I know if I am kinky?

For some people, it is clear from their inner experiences and earliest memories that they want something more than vanilla sex to be a part of their lives. For others, the path to identifying as kinky is discovered over time as they become aware of kink inclinations and learn more about the lifestyle.

Some challenges of kink and kinky relationships include:

- marginalization, stigma and social obstacles
- internalized oppression and shame
- identity and coming out issues
- understanding and articulating needs and interests
- agreements, negotiations and consent within kink

relationships, play scenes and other interactions

- lack of knowledge and understanding from the world

Potential gifts of kinky experiences and relationships include:

- deepening self-awareness, connection, sexuality and self-expression
- intensified communication and skillful relating
- exploring altered states and power dynamics
- opportunities for personal growth, self-knowledge and reflection
- celebrating diversity and living fantasies
- increasing sexual freedom and empowerment
- gaining an appreciation for the wisdom, strength, and courage that each partner discovers while navigating uncharted waters

WHAT IF MY PARTNER IS KINKY AND I AM NOT?

Introducing kink to a potential or existing partner may be received with interest, curiosity, excitement, trepidation, shock, or even revulsion. Your partner or potential partner may not identify as kinky or may not want to explore this aspect of sexuality with you. This is challenging for some relationships and requires partners be patient, compassionate and respect differences.

Being able to address one another's needs and feelings as well as intimacy and relationship issues will help you discover what is right for you or your relationship in the moment. When one partner does not identify as kinky, special attention and care must be given to all to include and honor differences and limits. Often, community networks, support groups and professional assistance are useful when processing strong tensions and change.



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WHAT CAN I EXPECT IF I COME OUT AS KINKY?

Sharing your kinky or BDSM identity or relationship is a very personal and individual decision. Who and when you tell may depend on your feelings of safety and trust in the person(s) you are speaking to as well as other factors.

You may find acceptance or be challenged by friends' and family reactions. You may find that others have little or no knowledge or awareness of what kink and BDSM are. They may be confused or assume it is abnormal, strange, or a sign of mental illness.

WHERE CAN I CONNECT WITH OTHERS EXPLORING KINK AND BDSM?

The **Chicago Kinkster Support Group** meets on the last Saturday of the month, from 1:30 - 3:30pm, at The Center on Halsted in Chicago, facilitated by Rami Henrich, LCSW and Cindy Trawinski, Psy.D. There are also private clubs, online resources and social events hosted by members of the kink community in the Chicago area. You can find out more about the Chicago Kinkster Support Group at www.lifeworkspsychotherapy.com/events/

Other online resources include:

National Coalition for Sexual Freedom (NCSF)
www.ncsfreedom.org

Society of Janus (SOJ)
www.soj.org

Eulenspiegel Society (TES)
www.tes.org

WHO IS A KINK-FRIENDLY THERAPIST?

A kink-friendly therapist:

- provides a safe place where clients exploring kink/BDSM or who identify as kinky can explore the unique difficulties they face in meaningful ways
- explores their own personal ideas, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and biases with regard to kink and BDSM
- develops and uses "meta skills," or feeling attitudes, of open-mindedness, curiosity, acceptance, compassion, exploration and celebration of diversity
- realizes that people who are exploring kink/BDSM or identify as kinky, or who are in kinky relation-

ships, may be judged, stigmatized or pathologized by society, family, friends, co-workers, mental health and other professionals, public institutions and their community

- seeks and applies knowledge of the unique issues of clients engaged in kinky or BDSM relationships and requests consultation or supervision when needed

A directory of kinky friendly and aware professionals can also be found at Kink Aware Professionals (KAP) www.ncsfreedom.org/key-programs/kink-aware-professionals/kap-program-page.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFO?

Whether you identify as a top, a bottom, a switch, dominant or submissive, exploring kink, fetishes or BDSM, or are a vanilla partner loving someone who is finding their way with kink – we all long for respect, support and encouragement. We recognize that as we endeavor to live in any relationship and to explore our experiences, we often need more support and help than our culture and extended social networks may provide. We also know that when attempting to live outside the mainstream in any way or in culturally specific communities, you may face special difficulties and challenges that sometimes complicate or stress your life.

LifeWorks clinicians **are sex-positive, kink and poly friendly and aware**. We have many years of experience working with diverse relationship constellations, issues and conflicts.

In the spirit of recognizing and welcoming diversity at LifeWorks, we strive to serve and honor each individual as a unique and whole being deserving care, respect and confidentiality. If you are seeking support to find more fulfillment and acceptance for yourself, your relationship and/or your culture, we can help. Please call today to speak to a therapist.

LifeWorks Psychotherapy Center offers individual, relationship and group psychotherapy as well as seminars and classes open to the public.



Rami Henrich, LCSW

I believe you already have what you need inside of yourself to have a meaningful life, to solve and resolve problems, to be joyful and content. As a therapist my job is to help you access a deep sense of knowing your own source of creativity and your true nature. I see myself as a facilitator of inner and outer relationship processes.



Cindy Trawinski, Psy.D.

I believe psychotherapy is one way to learn, to grow and to bring more awareness to our day-to-day lives. The whole of life can be an adventure full of experimentation and learning with the right attitudes and skills.



Pat Cochran, Psy.D.

When you engage with your struggles, it may lead to a shift in attitude, even though nothing on the outside may change. Engagement is at the root of all lasting or profound psychological change. I undertake a journey with my clients towards an openness and receptivity to the very things they would rather move away from, and instead go deeper into them and perhaps develop a new capacity to life within their struggles, seeing them in an entirely new way.

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