

So you've discovered that you're submissive, what now?

An Original Article by ~ subtleigh © 2004

When we first discover this about ourselves, after the initial shock, psychoanalyzing ourselves, etc, we are eager to find someone to share our lives and ourselves with. As submissives, we have an overwhelming need to belong to and/or serve someone. This is a normal need. We all experience it.

Because of this strong need to belong, many newcomers to the scene make decisions too quickly. They may meet someone (online or in person) and because there is interest, jump 'head first' into a relationship with someone they barely know, just to have that sense of belonging.

But wait... Now is not the time to go seeking your "one true Master" <<< a phrase I detest.

Now that you've discovered this wonderful thing about yourself, it's time to learn more about yourself. READ... READ...READ...

I cannot stress this enough. Take the time to learn all the different aspects of D/s, S/M, or the all-encompassing BDSM. You don't have to like pain, but if you do, that's fine too. So explore. What's out there? What are your options? What's the difference between humiliation and degradation? What is scarification? What's a quirt, a flogger, a vampire glove?

If you don't know what your options are, how can you make an educated decision about your life? You should not expect to find someone out there to decide that for you. You have to decide who you are, what you have to offer and what you are looking for in a partner, BEFORE searching for the one to whom you will give yourself. There are so many books and websites out there to read, study, and get the knowledge you need to find your partner.

Keep in mind, however, that books and websites are guidelines, not the end-all to anything. They are meant to be informative so you can make your own decisions, not recipes or directions of how it must be done. Even recipe items can be substituted, and if you miss a turn, there is usually an alternate route. If you find one that says, "You must do X or else you aren't submissive," it's probably not the site you want to be learning from. And, if you feel you are submissive, don't let ANYONE tell you aren't just because you feel differently than they do on a subject.

Okay. Now you've read every website you can find and every book you could get your hands on. It's time to talk to other submissives. Go to local munches and meetings (if there are any near you), and meet others in the lifestyle. Too many times, people are terrified to go to these things because they don't know what to expect. They fear they'll say something wrong, make fools of themselves, or get "in trouble". No one is going to punish you, or expect anything of you at all. You're not being interviewed for a position.

We're just people... who happen to be kinky. We sit around and talk about similar interests. Not much different if you went to a meeting about 'golf'. Different people might talk about different golf clubs, strokes, courses, etc. But they all have the same interest. Golf.

Talk to both dominants and submissives. (They won't bite you...unless you want them to.) LOL... Find out what their lives are like. Ask questions. Get advice. Keeping in mind that not all advice you get from "seasoned" submissives will be good advice. A little story about what happened to me in this regard:

I often go to munches and meetings. At one of these meetings, the topic was "punishment". I made a statement that Master hardly ever punished me. According to Master, I hardly ever require it. Anyway, as I made this statement, people were surprised that in the 2 years we had been together at the time, I had only been punished once. One submissive, whom I respected, suggested that I purposely avoid some of my responsibilities (like ironing or dishes) to "test" Master... to see if He would punish me. That was about the worst advice I'd ever gotten from a respected peer.

I am submissive, why in the world would I want to send Master off to work with a wrinkled shirt because I didn't iron it, or not have a clean glass to offer a guest? This would not only reflect badly on me, but on Him. I would never do something like that.

The moral is, while advice is a good thing, not all advice will be sound advice. So... as Master often tells me, and I often repeat, "Take what you like, and leave the rest."

However, the following piece of advice is definitely worth reading. When you go to a munch, a club, a meeting, etc. Please...don't beg entrance, curtsy, bow, or float gracefully across the room and fall gently to your knees before the doms, offering rose petals or whatever other lame thing is done in many chat rooms of that sort. You will be laughed off the face of the earth, dismissed as a dumb-ass, or if done in a public place, taken by the police to the nearest psych unit. LOL... No need to put on a big show or draw that kind of attention to yourself. Once in a relationship, if your dominant wants you to curtsy to him or her, that's his or her call.

Just be respectful and be yourself.

One of the common misnomers which annoys me is that "RESPECT must be earned". That's just not true.

If you were out shopping and had a question, you might say, "Excuse me Ma'am, could you tell me where I can find the paper towels?" That's showing respect. Good manners.

You know... those things our parents or guardians tried to instill in us when we were growing up. Showing good manners is being respectful. Calling someone Sir, Ma'am, Doctor, Sgt., Professor, etc. are all examples of showing respect for someone.

I use titles of that sort when talking to anyone I'm not on familiar terms with.

However, in my opinion, the terms "Master" & "Mistress" should not be used lightly. Just because a man is someone's Master, doesn't mean you must (or, should) call him that. He is that person's Master, not yours. If you wish to show respect to someone else's Master or Mistress, a simple "Sir" or "Ma'am" is adequate. I have had dominants (men in particular) demand that I call them "Master". I have simply said, "Sir, you are not my Master. If you have an issue with this, then I suggest that you speak with my Master. He's right over there." This usually shuts them up.

Online, though, I have gotten replies like "I'm your Master now." I simply put them on ignore or inform Master, who is normally sitting right beside me at his computer and well... He handles it. LOL... I call no one Master, except my Master.

Growing up, I was taught that respect should be given to everyone (regardless of societal status, employment, and later in life, whether they're in the lifestyle or not). So I do. I respect everyone, unless and until they do something and no longer deserve my respect.

TRUST, on the other hand, is what must be earned.

If you were out shopping, would you trust the lady behind the counter to tie you up, and play with you? Would you trust her to not hurt you? Would you trust her to make decisions about your life? I certainly hope not.

Going back to that 'jumping too quickly' and 'needing to belong to someone' thing, let's expand a bit.

You've studied, learned about yourself, and talked to others in the lifestyle. Now you're ready to find a partner, so you start actively looking. Decide what you DO and DO NOT want in a partner. Both are equally important.

Once you find someone you share an interest with, discover your compatibility. It's very important to discuss all areas and aspects of the life and type of relationship you might be sharing with your prospective partner. It's important to know where they stand on the D/s scheme of things. Some of the things you might wish to discuss include, but are not limited to: Dynamics of the relationship, expectations, punishment, types of play (do a checklist), limits, safety (including safe sex), safe words, health (mental & physical), etc.

However, what about life in general together?

There is more to finding a partner than whether or not they are an experienced and good top/dominant. Is he or she a good human being? Can you trust this person not only with your physical well-being, but can you trust them to make decisions for you based on your moral beliefs? That part is often overlooked in the beginning, as the BDSM part seems to be the main focus when trying to determine compatibility. But what about things like: Bank accounts, will they be joint?; is marriage an option?; what if one of you (depending on gender) gets pregnant?; what if one of you cannot have children?; is religion an important issue to one or both of you?; will you be allowed, expected, or required to work outside the home?; does your prospective partner use drugs or alcohol?; what about medical care?; what about family? Find out about these and any other things that may be important to you.

When in a D/s relationship, there is a certain amount of conditioning/training/change that may take place. But, if you try to conform to the dominant's 'grand plan', when it absolutely does not match your own desires and needs, then you are "settling" and are not likely to find yourself in an ideal situation. I'm not saying you have to agree on every little detail. That whole "to-may-toe/ to-mah-toe" thing isn't a big issue, but there are many things that you may not be able to compromise on. Compromise is good...but knowing when and on what issues is vital.

Too often, a novice will settle for what they might believe is the best they can do, as opposed to what they really need. Maybe they've searched for months or even a couple of years without success. This can be exceptionally disheartening.

However, settling for the first person that shows you attention can be disastrous. Would you go to a bar, meet a person and then run off to the Justice of the Peace and marry him or her that very night, that week, or even that month? Most probably not.

Generic vanilla-type questions are just as important, as the D/s related ones. **GET TO KNOW YOUR PARTNER.** You have the inalienable right to consent. It is your choice, and that choice should not be made rashly.

In getting to know your partner, he or she will be learning about you too. It is "imperative" that you be completely honest not only with him or her, but with yourself as well. Tell him or her what you need, what you're interested in, what you're afraid of, what you might want to try some time in the future, but perhaps aren't ready for yet. If you are unsure about something, say so. If you don't know what something is, ask.

Dominants are not mind-readers... If you want something, ask... Even though it detracts from our ideal of having our dominant **JUST KNOW** what we want/need. Most people aren't experts on taking hints. So, if they don't know you want it, chances are... you won't get it.

If you do ask, and they don't really give you an answer, in some cases, you may have to reaffirm your interest, possibly even a few times. It might be that he or she simply wants to make sure it's something you really want, and not a whim. Been there...done that...LOL... If they haven't given you a definite no, just remind him or her that you really want to try it, whatever it happens to be. However, I don't recommend nagging.

“Triggers” is another topic of importance.

Think incredibly hard about your past. The times you've been hurt, specific words, names, or scenarios that could cause a 'trigger-effect' (define this as “something that makes you cringe and/or recall vividly bad past experiences”). It's not exactly fun to reflect on the bad parts of our past, but is important to do so in order to help avoid possibly bad situations in the future. Make sure you know each other's limits, too.

Too often, new submissives are afraid to say “no” due to a fear of disappointing their dominant or not seeming “very submissive” if they refuse. That's bunk!!! Limits are set for a reason, and it's ok to say no. Always, always, always play with a safe word. I don't mean to use safe words or say no when he asks you to get him a glass of tea, or tells you the dishes must be done, or even to wash the windows. I'm talking about something that is important to you.

If it goes against your physical, emotional, spiritual, or moral fibers, then say NO. Don't “Yes Ma'am” or “Yes Sir” someone to death just because it is what you think you should do as a submissive. What you SHOULD do, is be honest. Saying you are “into” something that you really are not, is deceitful and dangerous. It has destroyed relationships and caused people to get hurt. Too often, newbies are so anxious to get into a relationship and to “please” that they will agree to just about anything, not realizing what they are getting themselves into. Some things may be a wonderful fantasy, but the reality is damning.

For instance: A fantasy that is such a turn-on for me is gang-bang rape, and to be forced to have all orifices violated at the same time. The fantasy of it is exciting for me. Also, I've fantasized about being beaten until my back is laid open in bloody laces. Do I really want these things to happen? Hell NO! So don't confuse fantasy with reality.

Although you may be new and inexperienced, it does not mean you are ‘unworthy’ or will disappoint your experienced dominant if you can't “handle” all he or she can dish out.

Ideally, he or she will be willing to go slowly and not try to push your limits the first several times you're together. Again, ALWAYS play with a safe word, and have safe calls set up. He or she shouldn't think you're a “wimp” or “unworthy” because you are new and taking precautions. If they do, then they are the “unworthy one”.

If he or she knows you are new in the beginning, it should be understood that you are not going to be able to take a significant single-tail lashing or a cane the first time you play. If they imply otherwise, that is a huge red flag.

Whether they actually say or do something, or, if it is simply an uneasy feeling you have, pay attention to ‘red flags’.

Get references, if possible (and not only email references). Talk voice-to-voice with people who have played with or been in a relationship with the dominant before. Talking to a former playmate or submissive might seem a little awkward, but it’s better than getting used, mistreated, robbed, or butchered by a wanna-be who tells you he or she is the grand-master blah-blah-blah of this or that old guard(e) house. Especially, beware of someone who tries to isolate you.

When searching for a dominant, logic should not be thrown out the window. No one is a “Super-Dom”, nor does he or she have ALL the answers. Dominants are human too. The romanticization of the Internet has put, in some instances, unrealistic ideals, standards or expectations in peoples’ minds.

Did you ever try to stir a pot of stew with chains dangling from your wrists? It’s just not logical. You will get burned!!!

In any type of D/s relationship, including a 24/7 live-in situation, you realistically can’t be chained to the floor all the time, or even play as often as you might like. Work, family, friends, shopping, walking the dog, and many other things play a large factor in our daily lives. Believe it or not, people get tired, sick, or just don’t feel like playing. It’s not what we fantasize about, but it’s reality and life.

In online relationships, micro-management appears to be more prevalent, because there isn’t the day-to-day in-person interaction between two people. Therefore, ways to control a person are often more psychological than in a real life relationship. For a couple of hours a day online or on the phone, it’s not that difficult. However, in a relationship outside the Internet, there is the decision-making and responsibility for another person’s life other than oneself. This is a huge responsibility.

Don’t make it harder on your dominant by placing unrealistic expectations on him or her, and be prepared to make some decisions on your own. Most real-life dominants do not care what color socks you wear. They may want control over you, but I find that most are not into micro-management. Expect this...and please... don’t call your dominant at work every time you have to go pee (unless he or she tells you to).

Explore... and above all, enjoy yourself... That’s what it’s all about. Just do it safely, sanely, and consensually.