

ABUSE IS NOT S/M AND S/M IS NOT ABUSE

by the Northwest Network

Whether you are topping, or bottoming, or both, these are some questions to ask yourself:

- Is your partner turned on by violating your limits or terms?
- Does your partner not use a safeword, and then later say you violated his/her limits?
- Does she claim to know more about your s/m “energy” than you do?
- Does your partner try to extend a dynamic outside of a scene without your consent?
- Does your partner expect you to read her mind about what she/he wants?
- Does your partner refuse to talk about what felt wrong or confusing to you about a scene?
- Does your partner negotiate while in role when you haven’t agreed to that?
- Do you feel guilty after playing, like you’ve done something wrong?
- Do you feel like you’re playing because you have to?
- Does your partner involve others in your scenes without asking?
- Does your partner say you pushed her/him too far even though you stayed within the limits you negotiated?
- Does your partner humiliate you by talking about your play in public without your consent?
- Does your partner use arousal or orgasm as evidence of consent?
- Do you feel fear or dread about ending a scene or setting a limit?
- Does she say you’re not “real” for wanting to switch or pressure you into switching?
- Are you confused about when a scene begins and ends?
- Do you feel that if you could just play better, be hotter or give/take more, everything could be okay?
- Does your partner use scenes to suppress or cover up anger and frustration?

S/M play is consensual	Abuse is not consensual
S/M play is negotiated and agreed upon ahead of time	Abuse is not negotiated
S/M has responsible limits and safety rules	Abuse has no rules or limits and there are
S/M is fun, erotic and loving	Abuse is manipulative, selfish and hurtful
S/M play is enjoyed by both	Victims do not enjoy abuse
S/M play can be stopped by either partner at any time	Abuse cannot be stopped by the victim/survivor
Players exchange power in agreed upon roles with negotiated boundaries	Abusers force control using non-consensual manipulation and violence
S/M creates a bond of trust	Abuse destroys trust