



Consent Guidelines for Facilitators, Organisers, Community Leaders and Other Professionals

About these guidelines

Most experienced members of kink and sex communities have a pretty good knowledge of the basics of consent around sex and kink practices. However, things take on a different dimension when we're involved in some kind of leadership, teaching, or therapeutic role within our communities. These guidelines provide an overview of some of the key things to be mindful of once you have taken on such a role. They have been written by a group of event organisers and kink-affirmative therapists / educators.

1. Acknowledge the power difference that is present between yourself and people you are teaching, leading, organising, or working with as clients. This may complicate the ease with which the others can freely consent to sex, play, or a relationship, with you. With great power comes great responsibility! Even if you don't feel very powerful, and you are aware of all of your flaws and imperfections, simply having this kind of role means that other people may look up to you. They may feel flattered by any attention from you, be keen for your approval, or put themselves under pressure to do what you say even if you tell them it's okay to say 'no'. They might be concerned about disappointing you. Also your role may mean that you have less time and energy available than others, for example if a person needs more aftercare than anticipated, or if anything challenging happens during an encounter.
2. Be aware of cultural power differences that may exacerbate any dynamic. For example if you are older or more experienced than the other person; if there are gender, race, ethnicity, class, financial, education, language, disability status or other differences between you which mean that you are from a culturally more privileged group; or if there are differences which mean that they are somebody who is generally deemed less culturally 'attractive', is less able to find partners, or has lower self-confidence or mental health struggles.
3. Be conscious of how these dynamics might advantage you and disadvantage others: For example as an organiser or facilitator you may have more status than the other person in the community; people may be less likely to flag your behaviour than they are to report the behaviour of others; the community may be more likely to believe you than someone else if anything goes wrong; if someone is your employee or workshop demo-person they might be afraid to offend you for fear that you or others might withdraw money, support, or access to networks from them.
4. For these reasons it is worth being extremely cautious about embarking on sex, play, or a relationship under these differences in power and role. If in doubt it is better simply not to. For example, many facilitators make a point of only playing or meeting people outside of the communities in which they are known as a teacher/leader or professional – sometimes even only in other countries! Another possibility is to specifically look to other people in similar roles to play with or strike up relationships with, perhaps creating specific online and offline spaces for such things.
5. Definitely avoid viewing workshop attendees, clients, students, and the like as your pool of sex/play partners. Concerns can get raised about leaders and professionals who regularly embark on relationships with their clients or students, or who consistently play with attendees directly after leading an event or running a workshop.
6. Consider letting others initiate. One good way of encouraging the power dynamic to be shifted somewhat is for you never to be the one who initiates possible play or relationships with these



groups of people. But remember that some difference in power and role still exists even if you let others initiate.

7. Bring the difference in power out in the open. Before you do anything have a good chat about the dynamic between you and the possible impact it may have. This is generally good practice whoever you are. Can you ensure that both/all of you will really feel able to say 'no' to something or stop something they are uncomfortable with? If not then it's better not to go there.

8. Don't imply that you know more about what a person wants/needs than they know themselves. This is creepy! It can't be done consensually. By all means endeavour to empower someone in what they say they want, but to imply that you know better about someone else's desires or body is disempowering and not consensual.

9. If you're unsure of any of this, seek support. If you feel like you might already have unwittingly engaged in non-consensual behaviours, or if you're not clear about the boundaries or the positions of power that you occupy, then seek support before going any further. Pink Therapy can put you in touch with a kink-aware professional who can provide mentoring, supervision, guidance or therapy depending on what is appropriate.

10. If you are accused of anything, also seek support. If you have done all of 1-9 and still somebody accuses you of non-consensual behaviour this can feel very tough indeed. You're highly likely to be triggered initially and to need some time to process. Support is available to help you to reflect on your practice, to figure out the most compassionate way forward (for yourself and for the other person or people concerned), and to mediate if that is appropriate. Don't immediately dismiss anyone making an accusation. Avoid using social media (eg friending people or liking posts) as a subtle way of connecting, building your case or apologising. Be cautious about making any immediate public response without yourself having obtained advice (see 9) on how best to proceed. It can be incredibly hard for people to openly admit that they've experienced something non-consensual. So if community members get shut down or doubted when they make such statements, it can put other people off from making reports about non-consensual behaviours.

About the authors of this document

We've been involved in the kink community for many years some as event organisers others having attended a wide range of events and parties. We're psychologists, psychotherapists, sex educators, clinical sexologists and sexological body workers. Most of us have a minimum of 5 years up to over 30 years experience of working with a wide range of diverse lifestyles and relationship forms. We regularly attend kink oriented CPD.

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