**Basic Rules for Negotiations**

(Southeast Leather Fest 2017 – M. Varii)

**1. You are an adult and are responsible for your own safety. Do not put yourself in danger. DO speak up!**

• If you aren’t strong enough to speak up if something is happening you don&#39;t want to happen, you aren’t healthy enough to play!  No one can read your mind!

• What we do is Consensual!! Do not stay quiet or even worse consent, and then blame the other person for your bad experience!

• Most public venues subscribe to one or all of the following: SSC = Safe, Sane, Consensual; PRICK=Personal Responsibility in Informed Consensual Kink; or RACK= Risk Aware Consensual Kink.

•  Submissives are NOT weak, and Dominants should not be arrogant assholes especially during negotiations (if they are they are likely NOT truly dominant).  During negotiations both sides of the slash are equal.

• Until and unless you have a level of trust that warrants an actual relationship this isn't a D/s or M/s dynamic, you are negotiating as a “Top” and a “bottom”, and are negotiating a "scene".

**2. If you are new, or about to play with someone who is new:**

• Vet them!  Are they known and respected in the community?  Do they have experience in the area you are about to negotiate and want to explore?  Anyone can say anything, how are you insuring your safety (emotionally and physically)?

• Set simple and specific goals for your first few encounters with a new partner. Start small, and build as trust is established.

• It is much safer to play in a public venue.  In a public venue there are 'dungeon monitors' and experienced people that will help keep you safe.

• If you are going to meet someone outside of a public venue, follow every established rule for safe encounters. Be cautious and smart.

**3.  All negotiations start with HONESTY!**

• Be honest about your level of experience (we all started somewhere).  Being new on either side of the slash is not a negative as long as you are honest about it, and take the steps necessary to learn.

• Be honest about what you want out of the scene.  If you are new, it may just be to try something to see if you like it.  No one reads minds.  You have to be honest about what you want to have a chance to get it.

• Be honest about your limits (everyone has them). You may not know what all of them are, and that's OK, but state what you do know.  If you are about to experience something totally new, set specific things you want and stick to that for the first time.

• Be honest about physical limitations or health concerns.  For example "I would love to try bondage with rope, but I have an injured knee to consider." Or "I'm diabetic." Etc

**4. Establish safe words, and use them if you need to.**

• Universal safewords are Red= Stop the scene NOW.  Yellow= Slow down, talk to me because something is problematic, but I want to continue the scene. Green= Everything is OK; I'm loving it and want more.

• Also know that unless otherwise established in negotiations, and especially when playing with someone new, direct communication should also work.  Example:  "I don't like that, could we try something else please", or "OMG that is awesome, thank you."

• Never put yourself in a vulnerable situation with someone you don't know without some type of safety net.

**5. The same words or phrases may mean totally different things to different people.**

• Example: CBT: For one person that may mean tease and denial play to control arousal and ultimately intensify the orgasm; to someone else it is being kicked in the balls.

• Familiarize yourself with the lingo, but discuss your interpretation of words and phrases, and ask for their interpretation.  Make sure you are on the same page, and in the same book.

**6.  Start slow! You don't have to experience everything today.**

• Don’t push yourself farther than you are comfortable especially with a new partner.  Wade in, and take the time to learn to swim in this vast kinky ocean.

• There is something called 'frenzy' (top frenzy or sub frenzy).  It can make you careless, or reckless.  If you are a top, don't play beyond your skill level without supervision.  If you are a bottom, don't push the intensity without safeguards in place and deserved trust in your top.  Safety first always..

**7.  If you are a newbie (top or bottom), it is a good idea to have a mentor if possible.**

• Mentors are your teachers, your advocates, NOT your play partners, and preferably on the same side of the slash! They can help you negotiate, learn a new skill, and vet potential play partners. A mentor should be someone the **COMMUNITY** respects.

• Arrogance is a big red flag, RUN!  If someone wants to charge you to be a mentor or teacher, RUN!

• If you want to attend classes, do so through established, reputable organizations or BDSM conferences with great reputations.  They go to great length to insure the knowledge, safety, and skill of their presenters.

• As a newbie, be VERY careful of self proclaimed 'teachers' and 'mentors'. Predators and Cons frequently pose as 'teachers', 'mentors', or 'trainers'.  If you can't vet them through the community leaders, stay away from them!

**8. If something feels "off" in negotiations, trust your gut and do not move forward.**

• Sometimes after the scene starts you might hit a "trigger" emotionally or physically you hadn't anticipated, or maybe you didn't like something you thought you would enjoy.  If it doesn’t feel right, or you don’t want to continue **SAY SO!!**

• Tops can also call "Red", and should be willing to do so for themselves or for the bottom if they feel the scene should stop.  That doesn't make them a bad TOP; it makes them a good one, and a responsible one.

**9. Aftercare:  Not just for “bottoms”, and needs vary dramatically. Discuss!**

• Depending on the type and depth of the scene, it may take a little time for one or both people to "recover".

• Most “bottoms” will need water to rehydrate, a blanket, maybe a piece of candy if their blood sugar drops, and a little time.  Some want to be held, some don't. Some want to talk, some don't.  If it is a very light scene, little is usually needed.  If it was intense, emotionally or physically, it may be more involved.

• Most “Tops” will need water to rehydrate and a little time. If it was intense emotionally or physically they may need more. Sometimes they may need distance, or conversely, bonding time with their bottom.

• Top Space or sub space: “Space” on either side of the slash is an endorphin/adrenaline high. Some feel “giddy” or drunk, some energized and talkative, others “floaty” or mellow. In any event it is an altered state, and the person experiencing it is not always aware they are compromised. Don’t drive, or make decisions until you fully "land".

• In negotiations, decide who will provide whatever level of aftercare is needed.

• Unless other arrangements have been made, the Top should see to the needs of the bottom in some way, either

personally or by proxy.

**10.  Your likes and desires will change over time, and in different situations.**

• "Hard limits" and "soft limits" may change over time; HOWEVER, whatever the stated limits are for a particular scene, should be respected!  Never, EVER, push past a stated "Hard limit"! Doing so is a “consent violation” and a very serious offense in our community!

• Never renegotiate limits within a scene.  Once a scene starts, adrenaline, endorphins, and arousal can alter the judgment of both parties.  Stick to the agreement.  If it is truly a good idea to expand the limits, it will still be a good idea at another time.

• Likes and desires will change based on the level of trust you have with a partner, the type of relationship you are in, and your level of experience with different things.  This kinky world is vast and quite an adventure.