

# Red Flags



In order to maintain a healthy relationship, especially within the BDSM community, we need to be aware of signs of unhealthy behavior. Of course, these red flags can appear in any kind of relationship—but it's extra important when you're in a relationship with a power-dynamic or a heightened risk of injury. Submissives, especially, often find themselves in unhealthy dynamics with no idea how to spot the problems. Dominants, too, are able to experience this. For this reason, I've developed an outline of some of the most common red flags I hear from followers and some resources to help you deal with them.

The following are common things a partner might be doing if you're in an unhealthy relationship:

## **Insists you do not need a safeword.**

While some people prefer to play without a **safeword**, I will always speak against this practice. Safewords are *crucial* to a healthy D/s because without them, there is no way to revoke consent and that means you or your partner may not want to continue, but has no way of communicating this.



If your partner insists that you not use a **safeword**, you need to be firm in saying that will not be the case. I would take **extreme caution** with playing with someone who has suggested this, as it shows a lack of responsibility for you or your partner's safety and mental health. **Safewords** should always be required of everyone in order to play safely. If you don't want to use them, don't use them—but always *have* them in place.

### **Claims to have no hard or soft limits.**

This one is more common with submissives, but Dominants do it, as well. Claiming one has no limits shows a) a lack of experience and/or b) dishonesty. Though some people have more limits than others, everyone has limits. If your partner is insisting, they have no limits, ask about something you consider extreme and see if they would agree to it. Communicate the importance of having limits so that everyone is aware of boundaries. No one should go into a scene blind of where the boundaries are.



### **Pressures you into playing in ways that violate your personal limits.**

If you have established limits and your partner wants you to push them, there are two ways to go about this.

- 1) You express a desire to want to get past a certain limit and your partner discusses ways they can help you with this in a safe and controlled manner as to help you explore your sexuality.
- 2) Your partner hounds you to do something outside your limits and you feel really uncomfortable about this.

If your situation sounds like #2, you need to either have a strict conversation with your partner about limits or you need to leave the relationship.

A healthy dynamic does not involve true force of any kind. Remember that everything within a D/s is consensual and if your partner is pushing you to do something you don't consent to, this is unhealthy. Technically, it is abuse or sexual assault. Don't tolerate this behavior, and seek help if you need it.

### **Plays when they are angry or upset.**

This is another sign of an abusive relationship. A good partner will not play when they are angry or upset. This can lead to safety concerns, emotional problems, and abuse.



Dominants who are angry and wish to punish their submissives need to take time to think about an appropriate punishment instead

of lashing out. Physical violence is never a way to solve underlying problems. The submissive should know why they are being punished, agree that it is fair, and feel forgiven after the punishment.

Submissives who play when they are upset are often covering up mental health problems. While healthy people can play after a bad day and feel much better—unhealthy folks will play to “hurt themselves,” so to speak, and will still feel badly after a scene. If this is the case, the submissive should seek counseling to work out their mental health problems instead of using D/s as a means to self-harm. Playing the sadist to an unstable masochist can end very, very badly. It is dangerous and shouldn't ever be considered. Put your partner's mental health above play at all times.

**Insists that you address them as a specific title (Sir, Master, slut, fuck-toy) upon first meeting them.**

This is a problem a lot of people face with potential partners. Fact of the matter is, you are no one's slut or Master until you have formed a relationship of some kind with that person and you both agree to these titles. Don't let anyone make you feel like you have to address them in a way you don't like or be addressed in a disrespectful manner.



**Does not provide aftercare.**

**Aftercare** is *crucial* to a healthy D/s relationship for most people, especially ones involving sadism and masochism. In fact, aftercare is often a defining difference between kink and abuse. If you are in need of aftercare and your partner doesn't realize it—speak up! Both Dominants and submissive who need aftercare are entitled to it after a scene.

If your partner ignores your needs and does not provide aftercare even when requested, you need to leave the relationship. This is an abuse of power and shows a lack of responsibility. You should never leave a scene feeling badly. It may not be required of everyone after every scene but for many people, **aftercare** is key to maintaining a healthy relationship.

### **Does not respect your safeword.**

**Safewords** are **required**. If your partner ignores or refuses to respect your safeword, this is assault. The scene needs to end with your safeword, always. Anything past that is no different than continuing after a “no” for relationships without a specific safeword. This is a revoke of consent and anything further without explicit consent is assault.

**Never, ever play with someone who doesn't respect your needs to stop or pause the scene. This is dangerous and highly abusive.**

### **Insists you stop using birth control or barriers during sex.**

Some people like birth control restriction with their partner, and that's fine for stable relationships with intent to care for any child resulting from that pregnancy. However, if you are not intending on getting pregnant and your partner insists you stop using **birth control**, this is a major red flag. This is abusive and highly dangerous.



Same goes for couples who cannot get pregnant and use barriers like condoms to prevent the spread of STDs. Never be forced into not using these methods. If one person in a relationship wants to use them, they will be used. No

further questions.

### **Initiates play when you or your partner is intoxicated.**

Couples can and will make their own decisions on this, and I am not here to tell you anything but the facts. Playing with an intoxicated person is assault. Even if you're in a committed relationship. A person who is drunk or high *cannot* **consent** to sex legally in the US and you or your partner may end up with rape charges, even if the person says “yes.” Contracts and consent prior to intoxication do not hold up in court, either.

To be safe, always wait to play until the person is sober. For your safety and theirs, do not play with an intoxicated person.

## **Makes you feel guilty for using your safeword.**

Never, ever feel guilty for needing to stop. It doesn't matter if you need to stop because you were triggered or because your leg cramped—never let your partner tell you it's not okay.



Any partner that makes you feel badly for safewording is a horrible person and doesn't deserve your trust. It's emotionally abusive to make someone feel bad for needing to stop play/sex. Don't tolerate it—you have every right to decide if you need to stop.

## **Refuses to have conversations about consent/limits/desires.**

Communication is so important. If your partner can't communicate important things like limits, safewords, consent, or their desires, it's going to be tricky. This is a red flag because it can lead to problems down the road. Relationships are difficult without proper communication—there simply isn't a way around it. Insist on communicating these important topics or find a new partner who will.

## **Does not treat you as an equal or disrespects you out of scenes.**

Unless you've discussed and agreed upon a 24/7 relationship, the scene ends with a safeword or natural progression. This means humiliation and painful physical contact stops there. Submissives who find themselves being put down by their partners out of scenes or at inappropriate times need to evaluate their relationship. Your self-worth will never depend on your partner and no one deserves to be with someone who makes them feel badly without their consent.

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Saving the World One Orgasm at a Time

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<https://www.submissivefeminist.com/red-flags/>

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# What is a “Red Flag”?

A “Red Flag” is any indication that you should steer clear of a particular person, either Dom/me or sub. These can pop up at any time, though most often in the beginning of a potential relationship. They can be obvious or they can be subtle.

Some common examples might be:

- 1) Inappropriate questions or comments during the initial conversations, such as do you want to play? or what are you wearing? or what do you look like? or asking for your phone number immediately, etc. Such questions have nothing at all to do with D/s, but rather indicate the person is looking for cyber or phone sex.
- 2) Moving too quickly: if the prospective Dom/me or sub seems to be in a hurry to begin a relationship, or to advance it faster than seems reasonable or comfortable for you. Like if they want to meet you within the first 10 minutes online. Trust is the cornerstone, and cannot be rushed. Clearly, there is no arbitrary time frame, but most long-lasting relationships take several weeks if not months to build before actual contact.
- 3) Inappropriate attitude: “Bow down and worship me” those who act as if every submissive must obey every so-called Dom, and begin giving or obeying orders from the word go. Or those who have the idea that each and every Tom, Dick, and Harry must be addressed as Sir, whether they know them or not. Many subs in the chat rooms do this, but respect is worth little if it is so lightly given. Both of these attitudes and practices show a poor understanding of the true dynamics of Dominance and submission.
- 4) Safety violations: reluctance to have a safeword or other safety precautions in place, either during the first meeting or later. Run.
- 5) Lack of communication: if your potential partner is reluctant to discuss something with you, pay attention. Likewise, and equally serious, if you are told directly or indirectly, that you may not discuss something with others, or may not talk to someone else, or may not go to a particular area, be careful. Trying to “gag” someone is a sign that something is wrong.
- 6) A persistent bad reputation: or unwillingness to give references. This can be tricky if the person you are talking to is new online, but it is still a red flag. Or perhaps a yellow one.
- 7) Trashing ex-partners. When someone is constantly talking about their ex publicly in the chat rooms and on bb’s, i.e., trying to ruin their rep, try to keep in mind that you might be their “ex” someday and be subjected to such treatment if things do not go the way they want. This is something that both Dom/mes and subs are frequently guilty of. Warning others of potential danger from an ex-partner is obviously a different case.

- 8) Frequent inconsistencies. If someone often makes contradictory statements from one day to the next, like Mon. tells you s/he has no children, then on Fri., mentions his/her son's birthday or something. If a person often seems to have a lot of trouble remembering what they have said to you from one day to the next, it could be that they are telling a lot of people a lot of different things. Just in general, I would encourage anyone to really try to get to know someone before making a final judgment on their character. However, caution and common sense should always rule. If you have doubts, do not give out personal information. You can still talk to this person, but be careful.

**And please, trust that GUT INSTINCT.**