

# Is it possible for a dominant to be abused by a submissive?

## **Lexa Michaelides**

Absolutely, and the idea that Dominants cannot be abused by submissives is one of the pervasive ways the kink community doesn't protect D-types.

The community spends a lot of time looking out for submissives and protecting them from abusive Dominants. We talk about knowing your limits and being comfortable asserting your boundaries. We talk about the danger of no-limits relationships and what a red flag it is when a Dominant talks about how "real submissives" shouldn't need safewords but there is so little discussion of how submissive can abuse their Dominants and how the power dynamic doesn't protect Dominants from abuse.

So, a brief primer on abuse in general before I speak to the specific issue of Dominants being abused by submissives:

- If you were pressured into doing things you didn't want to do, that's abusive.
- If you felt unsafe (emotionally or physically) because of your partner, that's abusive.
- If your partner didn't respect your limits and boundaries, that's abusive.

There is no circumstance which mitigates abuse. Your partner having a history of *being* abused doesn't negate their own abusive behavior. Your partner disagreeing with your behavior doesn't negate their own abusive behavior. Your partner being "submissive" to you doesn't negate their own abusive behavior.

Dominants need to establish boundaries, limits, and safe words just like submissives do. Just because you have "the power" doesn't mean you are immune to abusive behavior. I've noted many times that while a D/s relationship might involve power dynamics, people are still inherently equal beings with their own agendas and agency. As much as I might profess to be devoted to my Dominant's will and desires, I do still have my own mind.

Manipulating a Dominant into continuing a scene or dynamic that they're not comfortable with is abusive. For example, if a Dominant really isn't comfortable with asphyxiation and the submissive cajoles and pressures them into participating anyway, that's not appropriate behavior even though the submissive is the one being subjected to a dangerous activity.

Making a Dominant feel guilty because they don't want to have sex is abusive. If a Dominant really isn't in the mood and the submissive continues to pressure the Dominant (for example, by whining and complaining about how horny they are), that's inappropriate behavior.

Finally, if you think you were "the one with all of the power in sexual situations" but you also feel you were being pressured and abused, here's a hint:

You probably didn't have all of the power. It's good that you left.

## **Claire J. Vannette**

Absolutely. Subs are people. They can be cruel or coercive, just like any other person.

You write, "I feel that it's not real because I was the one with all the power in sexual situations."

No, you clearly were *not* the one with all the power. If your sub was pressuring you into doing things you didn't want to do, then your sub was retaining their power and indeed using their power against you.

Doms sometimes have trouble acknowledging this, because they believe they *should* have all the power and never give any power up. They fear that if their sub manages to exert any power over them, they must be less dominant and therefore less worthy. Remember that however domly you may be, you can't take power that isn't freely given. That's what makes you a Dom rather than an abuser. And if someone tries to exert power over you, you are vulnerable. That's what makes you a person rather than a Dombot 3000.

Now, as a D/s practitioner, you are probably sensitive to power dynamics and thoughtful about how power works. You're out of the abusive relationship, so it's safe to reflect on how the power flowed between you two. What strategies did your partner use to exert power over you — to take power you didn't really want to give? Why did those strategies work? This isn't an invitation to self-shame. Notice your vulnerabilities without judging yourself for having them. Again, you are a human being, not a robot with a flogger.

I don't know what exactly happened between you and your sub. Here's a theoretical example:

Sub: I miss being caned. My last Dom loved to cane me.

Dom: I've never really been into caning. I don't have much practice.

Sub: Yeah, my last Dom said it takes a *really tough, dedicated person* to use the cane. It's not for *everyone*.

The sub is playing on the Dom's desire to be perceived as firm and competent, and on the fear of being compared and found lacking. Suddenly, the Dom worries how they'll look if they decline to use the cane. What it would say about them. Even though the Dom isn't comfortable with caning, they suddenly feel compelled to agree to it, to prove their worth. They have been successfully manipulated.

Anyone can be manipulated. Anyone can manipulate. Don't let D/s distract you from that.

Admitting that subs can try to take your power prepares you to recognize it if it happens again, to hear the alarm bells in your head, and to get out of the situation.

### **James Henry**

I have been a Sadist for 20 years.

This question makes me want to laugh and cry. YES, a dominant can be abused by a submissive. Both dominants and submissives are human beings. Human beings are capable of vast cruelty. Both dominants and submissives are also capable of not listening to their better judgement and ending a bad or toxic relationship.

I can say this with absolute certainty. I'm a dominant. My ex-wife is submissive. And she abused me for several years. She was manipulative and controlling. Yes, the submissive was controlling. She fucked with my emotions for years, breaking me down piece by piece. I was only able to leave when I hit a really deep depression.

You don't have to be physically stronger than someone to abuse them. A submissive is just as capable of cruelty as a dominant. And probably just as likely to be cruel.

### **Aiden Knight**

**In any relationship there is potential for abuse.** Saying that a submissive can't abuse a dominant is as wrong as saying that women can't abuse men, because men are perceived as having more power in a relationship. It simply isn't true.

It doesn't matter if you're dominant or submissive, you can end up being abused by your partner. It is real, and it is abuse.

People will have different power dynamics in different areas of a relationship. You were allowed to have control in relation to the acts you performed during sex, but that says nothing about your power in the rest of the relationship. If a person was in charge of family finances, but was beaten by their spouse, they would still be abused despite having power in an area that seems like it would keep them safe.

If you can get support or see a therapist about this, I'd really recommend it. I'm glad you were able to get out of the situation.

### **Justin Llamas**

Nobody is immune to abuse in a relationship, cisgender and straight or LGBTQ+, vanilla or BDSM, monogamous or polyamorous.

Just because Doms are presumed to have more power than their subs doesn't mean that they're immune to abuse. Men are subject to abuse from women despite traditionally being stronger physically.

I'm a dominant, and my ex-partner emotionally abused me (including pressuring me into sexual acts) and sometimes I feel that it's not real...

That's real abuse. If your ex is emotionally forcing you to perform sexual acts, you should be allowed to back your way out of them if you don't feel like doing it.

...because I was the one with all of the power in sexual situations.

No, you don't have all of the power. If your ex has the power to forcing you to perform sexual acts, then you don't have all of the power. In fact, your ex's power is undermining yours.

### **Dion Shaw**

Any relationship can be abusive, whether straight, gay, Dom, sub, master, slave, pick it.

Abuse can be physical, emotional, mental, or financial or even sexual.

A scenario where a sub abuses a Dom could well be any of the above, though a Dom may be unaware or unwilling to admit such abuse occurs.

If you feel you've been abused in any manner, you may to contact the authorities. In any case, the relationship needs to end, immediately. Abuse is simply not acceptable under any circumstance.

You may also consider some kind of therapy to understand why this occurred. Best wishes to you.

### **Loic Caquelard**

***"I feel that it's not real because I was the one with all of the power in sexual situations."***

Were you really in a D/s relationship?

Because stating that you *"had all of the power in sexual situations"* doesn't quite describe a D/s situation. If someone has more power than the other in such a relationship, it's the submissive.

Sure, the Dom's job is to assert what happens (in sexual and/or non-sexual contexts), including to the sub. But his/her biggest responsibility is to not go beyond the sub's needs or wants, and especially to respect what the sub looks for in the relationship. If someone has more power, it's the sub, because while the dom has the ability (the prerogative, I'd say) to do things to the sub, what the sub wants is the realm in which the dom can pick things. The sub's expectations are what drives the Dom's actions. That's a restraint as real as a rope or a pair of cuffs. That said, there is nothing that bars subs from doing awful things to their masters, if they want to do so.

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