

Working with Non-Traditional Sexual Interests in Sexual Offense Treatment

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Poll Question #1: Which statement best describes your opinion about BDSM?

- ▶ A. BDSM is unhealthy and people who practice BDSM would benefit from professional intervention.
- ▶ B. BDSM is healthy for some people, but clients in sex offense treatment should not practice any form of BDSM.
- ▶ C. Some (but not all) clients in sex offense treatment should be able to practice certain forms of BDSM.
- ▶ D. All clients in sex offense treatment should be able to practice certain forms of BDSM.
- ▶ E. All clients in sex offense treatment should be able to practice whatever form of BDSM they express interest in, as long as it's consensual.

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Flow

- ▶ Provide a brief overview of BDSM
- ▶ Consider situations in which interest in BDSM presents in sex offense treatment
- ▶ Consider ways of approaching and working with clients who report interest in BDSM in sex offense treatment

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Part I: Intro to Consensual BDSM
Bondage & Discipline, Dominance & Submission, Sadism & Masochism

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Clinical Terminology

- ▶ **Normophilic** - Sexual interest in genital stimulation or preparatory fondling with phenotypically normal, physically mature, consenting human partners
- ▶ **Paraphilic** - Any intense or persistent sexual interest other than sexual interest in genital stimulation or preparatory fondling with phenotypically normal, physically mature, consenting human partners
- ▶ **Paraphilic Disorder** - Paraphilia that is currently causing distress or impairment to the individual or a paraphilia whose satisfaction has entailed personal harm, or risk of harm, to others (American Psychiatric Association, 2022)

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Blurred Lines Between Paraphilias and Paraphilic Disorders

- ▶ Krafft-Ebbing's Psychopathia Sexualis (1886) - Described paraphilias such as sadism and masochism, focusing primarily on examples of non-consensual sexual violence
- ▶ Paraphilias not clearly distinguished from mental disorders in the DSM-III and DSM-IV
- ▶ Seen as dangerous, violent, related to self-harm or histories of abuse (Ritchers et al., 2008; Shahbaz & Chirinos, 2017)
- ▶ Mental health professionals have expressed views of BDSM as harmful (Shahbaz & Chirinos, 2017; Sprott et al., 2023)
- ▶ Stigmatized kink community (Bezreh et al., 2012; Sprott et al., 2023)

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**Un-blurring the Lines:
People who act on Paraphilic Fantasy**


- ▶ People who engage in abusive behaviors
 - ▶ Including domestic violence or sexual offending
- ▶ BDSM Practitioners
 - ▶ Consensual engagement in a variety of behaviors typically involving eroticizing power dynamics

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**What We Know About Paraphilic Fantasy
in People Who Commit Sexual Offenses**

- ▶ Tendency to use fantasy to cope with negative emotionality (Gauthier et al., 2023)
- ▶ Deviant Sexual Interests - defined as enduring attractions to sexual acts that are illegal or highly unusual - are one of the two major predictors of sexual recidivism (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005)
- ▶ Untested hypothesis: As Light BDSM and Extreme/Forbidden/Mysophilic interests seem to be relatively separate constructs, these constructs may not be equally strong risk factors for sexual offending (Schippers et al., 2023)

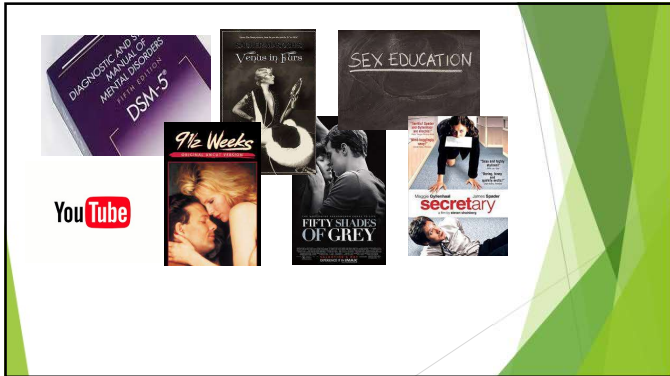
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**Where are we
getting our
information
about the other
group?**

**FIFTY SHADE
OF GREY**

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Poll Question #2: Where have you received information on BDSM?

- ▶ A. No training or exposure to BDSM.
- ▶ B. Informally from others (partners, clients, known someone who practices BDSM).
- ▶ C. Entertainment / media (movies, books, internet).
- ▶ D. Interactions or trainings with the Kink community.
- ▶ E. Research-backed educational books, articles, websites.
- ▶ F. During general formal training on sexual health or paraphilic disorders.
- ▶ G. Specific formal training on BDSM.
- ▶ G. Other.

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What We Know About BDSM

- ▶ Covers a wide variety of interests and behaviors
 - ▶ Not all involve pain
 - ▶ Not all involve sexual activity
- ▶ BDSM is not the same as Consensual Non-Monogamy
- ▶ Most practice BDSM only during specific circumstances
- ▶ Most are not exclusively interested in BDSM practices
- ▶ There is a difference between BDSM behaviors and identity
 - ▶ Not everyone considers themselves kinky
 - ▶ Not everyone interacts with a community

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Common BDSM Terminology

- ▶ **Kink** - Broad term for non-traditional sexual interests or behaviors, including BDSM, sometimes used interchangeable with BDSM
- ▶ **Play** - Time-limited engagement in BDSM practices or term for type of BDSM activity (i.e. impact play)
- ▶ **Scene** - Session of BDSM play
- ▶ **Top / Bottom / Switch** - Clarifies who is doing an action and who is receiving an action in a scene
- ▶ **Dominant / submissive** - Roles in which the exchange of control/authority is a central part of the dynamic
- ▶ **Sadist / Masochist** - Roles involving inflicting or receiving intense or painful sensation or humiliation
- ▶ **Subspace** - Altered state of consciousness that may occur for a Bottom in a scene (Ambler et al., 2017; Dunkley et al., 2019)

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Common BDSM Activities

- ▶ Impact
- ▶ Bondage
- ▶ Scene or Relationship Dynamics
- ▶ Role Play
- ▶ Body Modification
- ▶ Sensory Deprivation
- ▶ Sensation Play
- ▶ Rough Play

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Is BDSM Abuse?

In contrast to abuse, BDSM involves:

- ▶ Consent of all parties
- ▶ Planning to reduce risk of harm
- ▶ Negotiation prior to acting
- ▶ Mutually agreed upon rules
- ▶ Consensual erotic pleasure and/or personal growth of all parties
- ▶ Ability to stop at any time, for any reason, by any party
- ▶ Practitioners do not feel they have an intrinsic right to control the behavior of others

(Wiseman, 1998)

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Kink Community Response to Consent

- ▶ Safe Sane Consensual (SSC) or Risk Aware Consensual Kink (RACK) Mantras
- ▶ Hurt vs Harm
- ▶ Safety monitors at community events
- ▶ Workshops and Trainings
 - ▶ "Hard Skills" - Skills for engaging in certain types of play
 - ▶ "Soft Skills" - Interpersonal skills / skills for interacting
 - ▶ Vetting
 - ▶ Negotiation
 - ▶ Safe Words
 - ▶ Safety Call
 - ▶ Check-in

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How common is BDSM?

<p>Fantasy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ In Canadian study, 23-44% of sample reported interest in spanking or whipping; 41-52% in tying/being tied, and 26-65% in dominance/being dominated (Joyal, Cossette, & Lapierre, 2015) ▶ Dominance and Submission was the 11th most popular search category on Dogpile (Ogas & Gaddam, 2011) 	<p>Reality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1.8% of Australian sample engaged in BDSM in past year (Richters et al., 2008) ▶ 33.9% of Canadian sample had tried a paraphilic behavior in lifetime (Joyal & Carpentier, 2017) ▶ >20% of US population had tied/been tied, >30% spanked, <8% attend BDSM party in lifetime (Herbenick et al., 2017) ▶ 46.8% of Belgium sample ever tried BDSM; 7.6% considered selves BDSM practitioners (Holvoet et al., 2017)
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Why Do People Engage in BDSM?

- ▶ Control
- ▶ Emotional Satisfaction / Stress Relief
- ▶ Couple Bonding / Trust / Connection
- ▶ Leisure / Recreation / Extreme Sport
- ▶ Altered States of Consciousness
- ▶ Spirituality / Transcendence
- ▶ Heal from Trauma
- ▶ Please Sexual Partners
- ▶ Sexual Arousal / Pleasure

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How are they?

- ▶ BDSM was not correlated with abuse or sexual difficulties (Richters et al., 2008)
- ▶ BDSM was not related to psychopathology (Richters et al., 2008; Sprrott et al., 2023)
 - ▶ Men participating in BDSM reported lower levels of distress
- ▶ Compared to controls, BDSM practitioners were less neurotic, more extraverted, less rejection-sensitive, and had higher subjective well-being (Wismeijer & van Assen, 2013)
 - ▶ Women participating in BDSM were more confident in their relationships, had lower need for approval, and were less anxiously attached
- ▶ Masochism significantly linked to with higher satisfaction with sex life (Joyal & Carpentier, 2017)

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Part II: Clinical Work with Clients Endorsing Non-Traditional Sexual Interests

BDSM in SOTP

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Frank

- ▶ Convicted of Sexual Assault
 - ▶ Met Cindy at a bar and went back to her place, where they engaged in sexual activity - both parties believed initially to be consensual
 - ▶ Frank began to make "demands" during sexual activity and choked Cindy until she passed out
- ▶ In your office Frank states that he had been curious about BDSM, had seen pornography involving BDSM themes, and believed he was engaging in consensual BDSM during his offense

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Poll Question #3: Based on what you know, should Frank continue to practice BDSM?

- ▶ A. Frank should not engage in BDSM in the future.
- ▶ B. Frank may be able to practice certain BDSM activities in the future, but needs education and careful treatment planning for how to do so safely.
- ▶ C. Frank should be able to practice the BDSM activities he expressed interest in and does not need clinical intervention in this area.

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Alex

- ▶ Convicted of Voyeurism
 - ▶ Set up a series of hidden cameras to view people using the restroom in his home and at work
- ▶ In your office, Alex tells you he sees himself as a “Dominant” and is currently engaged in a D/s relationship
- ▶ Alex views D/s as a way of increasing intimacy and trust in his relationship and states it helps him feel useful, needed, and competent
- ▶ Alex also uses D/s as a way of meeting his partner’s needs

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Poll Question #4: Based on what you know, should Alex continue to practice BDSM?

- ▶ A. Alex should not engage in BDSM in the future.
- ▶ B. Alex may be able to practice certain BDSM activities in the future but needs education and careful treatment planning for how to do so safely.
- ▶ C. Alex should be able to practice the BDSM activities he expressed interest in and does not need clinical intervention in this area.

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John

- ▶ Convicted of Sexual Abuse of a Child
 - ▶ Had a close relationship with an 11-year-old girl, whom he later sexually assaulted
- ▶ Acknowledges pedophilic interests
- ▶ In your office, John expresses desire to engage in age play with "littles"
- ▶ John tells you that he believes age play will allow for consensual activity with adults in a way that will help him avoid acting out on fantasies to engage in sexual activity with children in the future

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Poll Question #5: Based on what you know, should John continue to practice BDSM?

- ▶ A. John should not engage in BDSM in the future.
- ▶ B. John may be able to practice certain BDSM activities in the future, but needs education and careful treatment planning for how to do so safely.
- ▶ C. John should be able to practice the BDSM activities he expressed interest in and does not need clinical intervention in this area.

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Should Clients in SOTP Engage in BDSM?

- ▶ What is our role as SOTP providers?
- ▶ Where does client autonomy come in?
- ▶ What are the client's goals?
- ▶ What does healthy sexuality look like for this client?
- ▶ Will these behaviors increase or decrease recidivism risk?
- ▶ Will these behaviors increase or decrease relationship problems?
- ▶ Is there a problem the client is trying to solve by engaging in BDSM?

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Where to Start with a Client Who Reports Interest in BDSM

- ▶ Reinforce willingness to share this with you and explore any concerns about this discussion
- ▶ Be aware of your own thoughts about BDSM
- ▶ Don't move too quickly into problem-solving
- ▶ Express willingness to process and better understand your client's interests and experiences

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Client Understanding of BDSM

- ▶ What is their understanding of concepts/terminology?
- ▶ How long have they engaged in BDSM?
- ▶ How strongly do they identify with BDSM?
- ▶ Is this interest ego syntonic or dystonic?
- ▶ How have they obtained / ensured consent during BDSM?
- ▶ Where are they getting their information about BDSM?
- ▶ Ideal scene:
 - ▶ What does this look like?
 - ▶ What sensory events or emotional states are appealing?

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What Behaviors Are We Talking About?

▶ Impact	▶ Pick-Up Play
▶ Pulling hair	▶ Handcuffs
▶ Scratching / Biting	▶ Rope bondage
▶ Sex toys	▶ Consensual Non-Consent
▶ Wearing leather	▶ Age Play
▶ Acts of service	▶ Choking
▶ Picking out clothes	
▶ Sensory play (ice, blindfolds, hot wax, feathers)	

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Why Does the Client Want to Engage in BDSM?

- ▶ Sexual arousal
- ▶ Urging from sexual partner
- ▶ Curiosity / sexual exploration / skills acquisition
- ▶ Interest in taboo topics
- ▶ Desire for structure (Dunkley & Brotto, 2020)
- ▶ Cope with paraphilic disorder
- ▶ Cope with boredom
- ▶ Cope with relationship problems
- ▶ Reenact abuse dynamics

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Does BDSM Relate to Offense Behaviors?

- ▶ Interest in BDSM leading to offending
- ▶ Interest in offending leading to BDSM communities / practices
- ▶ Escalations from consensual to non-consensual behaviors
- ▶ Efforts to avoid further offending through BDSM communities / practices

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What Are Our Clinical Concerns?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Consent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Abuse / Domestic Violence ▶ Harm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Risky behaviors ▶ Lack of awareness of harm ▶ Relationship Dynamics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Experience / Knowledge ▶ Willingness to Communicate ▶ Respect / Trust / Intimacy ▶ Over or under-emphasizing kink in treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Kink masking or relating to recidivism risk factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Paraphilic Disorder ▶ Attractions to Non-Consent (Harris et al., 2012; Seto et al., 2012) ▶ Impulsivity / Self-Regulation ▶ Sex as Coping ▶ Sexual Preoccupation ▶ Relationship Stability ▶ Hostility Toward Women ▶ Emotional Identification with Children
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Education and Awareness

- ▶ Ensure clients have a realistic understanding of BDSM
 - ▶ BDSM vs Abuse
 - ▶ Interests vs Behaviors
 - ▶ How BDSM may relate to risk
- ▶ Awareness of psychological, emotional, and physical dangers
 - ▶ Ex: Choking (Herbenick et al., 2020; Herbenick et al., 2022; Schori et al., 2022), Humiliation, Bondage
- ▶ Consider societal and relational struggles
 - ▶ Coping with stigma
 - ▶ Problems related to child custody
 - ▶ Potential loss of employment
- ▶ Awareness of local laws and probation stipulations on BDSM activities (Dunkley & Brotto, 2020)

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Moving Away From BDSM

- ▶ Return to Client Goals
- ▶ Motivational Interviewing
- ▶ Arousal Techniques (Gannon et al., 2019)
- ▶ Safety Planning
- ▶ Problem-Solving / Approach Goals
 - ▶ Increase intimacy skills
 - ▶ Improve conflict resolution skills

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Moving Toward BDSM

- ▶ Consider which specific behaviors to pursue and which to avoid
 - ▶ Recidivism risk
 - ▶ Safety risk
 - ▶ Personal boundaries
 - ▶ Partner boundaries
 - ▶ Societal boundaries and implications
 - ▶ Legal boundaries and Probation stipulations
- ▶ When to avoid starting or engaging in BDSM
 - ▶ Intoxication
 - ▶ Anger / Recent conflict
 - ▶ Adding activities during a scene
 - ▶ Lack of clarity on boundaries or consent

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Moving Toward BDSM

- ▶ Communication with partner
 - ▶ Boundaries / Limits
 - ▶ Wants / Expectations
 - ▶ Consent
 - ▶ What to do if something goes wrong
- ▶ Debrief with client
 - ▶ What went well
 - ▶ What went wrong
 - ▶ Changes to safety plans

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Moving Toward BDSM - Support

- ▶ Consider limited resources available due to sexual offense
 - ▶ Kink Community efforts to protect members by reporting and excluding people known to have engaged in abusive or aggressive behaviors
 - ▶ Exposure to risky stimuli
 - ▶ Rural setting limiting ability to engage physically with the community
 - ▶ Parole stipulations
- ▶ Support network
 - ▶ Awareness and reaction to interests
 - ▶ Awareness of differences between BDSM and abuse

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Resources

- ▶ National Coalition for Sexual Freedom: <https://ncsfreedom.org/>
- ▶ SM 101: A Realistic Introduction (Wiseman, 1998)
- ▶ Becoming a Kink Aware Therapist (Shahbaz & Chirinos, 2017)
- ▶ Clinical Guidelines for Working with Clients Involved in Kink: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0092623X.2023.2232801> (Spratt et al.2023)
- ▶ Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Sexual Minority Persons (apa.org) (American Psychological Association, 2022)

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Kink and BDSM in SOTP

- Alexander, A., Sower, E., Neal, B., & Schmader, A. (2023). Kink and BDSM awareness in sex offense treatment. *Journal of Positive Sexuality*, 9(2), 9-14. <https://doi.org/10.51681/1.922>
- Dunkley, C. R., & Brotto, L. A. (2020). The role of consent in the context of BDSM. *Sexual Abuse*, 32(6), 657-678. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1079063219842847>

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Poll Question #6: Which statement best describes your opinion about BDSM?

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- D. All clients in sex offense treatment should be able practice to certain forms of BDSM.
- E. All clients in sex offense treatment should be able to practice whatever form of BDSM they prefer, as long as it's consensual.

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QUESTIONS?

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