

# Negotiating Well With Others... and Yourself!

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## What is Negotiation?

- What do you think of when you hear the word negotiation?
- In the world at large? In an erotic context?

## Why Negotiate?

- Foreplay
- Self-exploration
- To learn about the person/their desires
- Clear communication/ on the same page
- Building trust
- Fun/Silly
- Roadmap to our fantasies
- Safety
- Desire to Play
- Preview/Trailer
- Getting new ideas
- Exploring another person's reality
- Consent (note on negotiating in D/s)
- Negotiating for desires to be heard
- Avoiding misunderstandings
- Hope for the best, plan for the worst

## Who do you need to negotiate with?

### Yourself

- Are you doing this type of play for yourself, or someone else?
- Are you “ready” for this?
- Do you want to play with this specific person, or with a specific type of play?
- Why do you want to play with this specific person or type of play?
- Why do you want to play now?
- If you want to play with this person, would you be okay with a different type of play (or a cup of coffee) with them? This concept of “wanna do some stuff” as compared to “do you want to play” was introduced formally by long-time kinksters Phillip the Foole.
- If you want to play with this specific type of play, would you be okay with someone else playing with you?
- How well do you want to know someone before you play with them?
- How well do you want to understand the type of play before you engage in it?

- What are you hoping to get out of all of this?
- Core of your kink

### **Partners**

- Safewords/in-scene communication systems
- Their answers to all of the above
- Can vary based on new people, reoccurring partners, long-term
- “What about that is hot for you?” – tells us a lot more than yes/no questions, and can also stop us from shutting down our partner from sharing
- Established Partnerships
- Doing new things
- Adding new people

### **Friends/Allies**

- What is their role in the scene?
- Can they be spotters or backup if you are playing with new folks?
- Can they provide aftercare?
- Can they hold space for big scenes?
- Can they keep their distance as you play alone?
- Can they check-in with you later to see if you are okay?

### **Space/Venue**

- Is this okay to do here? Venue rules?
- Norms of expected play in venue – Okay to do vs. appropriate
- Specific evening/room?

### **People You Don't Know/Know Well**

- Asking for personal references and checking the references given.
- Asking for play references. These are references from people who have played with the person and can give first-hand recommendations, not just the personal references mentioned above that speak of experience of character.
- Talking with people they did not list as references. Sometimes, asking the people who know them who are not their friends can tell us a lot.
- Watching them play with others.
- Meet in public before giving any home or other play location information. Would you give out your personal information to someone you just met at a bar? If not, why are you giving that information out to someone you have never met on the internet?
- Doing play that is “escapable” on a first date. This means no restrictive bondage, no play alone in their house, and no gags that might hinder clear communication.

- Running legal names through sexual predator lists and doing other research.
- Having a spotter or trusted voyeur who can intercede if negotiated play does not go as planned.
- Build safety systems such as a “safe call” (someone you have to check-in with by the end of the night who has a date’s legal name, address and phone number).
- Building trust as friends in advance before ever playing.

## **What to Negotiate**

### **YESs and Fantasies**

- Don’t assume what people are into
- Even if you have seen them play before (maybe that’s not what they want to do tonight, or with you)
- Even if you have seen their toybag/what they look like/how they dress/how they present themselves/what their labels are
- Even if you have known them a long time
- “Tell me more”
- “What about that does that for you?”

### **Definitions and Language**

- What is hot about that to you?
- What does that mean to you?
- What might that look like?
- What terms (honorifics and diminutives) should we use for each other in scene?

### **Communication Systems**

- Terms for each other (Honorifics, Diminutives, Roles)
- Safewords:
  - Stop lights.
  - Fantasy-specific terms.
  - Unlikely words/full names.
  - Saying the word “safeword.”
  - Grunt systems.
  - Dropping an object.
  - Squeeze systems.
- Joywords
- Saying What you Mean
- “No safewords”

### **Boundaries and Limits**

- Things that conflict with our morals or values

- Physical limitations
- Triggers or landmines that may “go off” in our psyche
- Personal squicks
- Activities that once initiated might lead us down a “slippery slope”
- Ideas we find scary or threatening
- Risks or concerns that would compromise our relationship
- Trauma from our past
- Concerns about physical, mental, emotional or social repercussions
- Things we have no experience with
- Play that we are “burnt out” on
- Hard Limits, Soft Limits, Frameworks, etc.
- Is it okay to shift/re-negotiate mid-scene?

## **Privacy Needs**

### **Medical Realities and Concerns**

- Physical, Mental, Emotional, Energetic
- Visible and Invisible Disabilities
- Working with personal tools – ignoring, incorporating
- What to do if things “go sideways”
  - It’s going to happen, someday, better to be prepared
  - Sub Drop, Top drop, energetic drops after scene
  - Freak Outs (folks involved, others)
  - Health Issues
  - Avoiding the Blame Game
  - Ending on a Good Note
  - Sour note re-purposing and learning lessons (growth can sometimes be painful, learning through when it does not work)

### **Aftercare**

- Physical
- Mental
- Emotional
- Talking
- With partners
- For audience
- Who provides?
- How long after? (just after scene, agreeing for rest of life)
- Who provides

## When to Negotiate

- In advance
- On the fly/in process
- Touching base (what if I change my mind?)

## Styles of Negotiation

- Reading the Labels (the pros/cons of labels)
- Over-sharing outside of Negotiation (classes/net, subtle sharing- books, links, movies, watching reactions to material)
- Flirtation
- Wanna Do Some Stuff? (I find you interesting, coffee?)
- Verbal / with Words
  - In-person
  - By phone
  - Online/other room
  - Written stories/essays (fantasy does not mean “I want to do this,” which does not mean “I am ready to do this now.”)
  - Combined with touch/nonverbal
  - Challenges and choices around negotiation and power exchange
- Nonverbal
  - Cruising
  - Touch (Swinger/Bathhouse approaches)
- Guess and Check (slow, sensual, all parties at great risk)
- Predator/Prey (Top at great risk)
- Winging It, with Debrief
- Mid-Play Desire Sharing (first time negotiation format, v. renegotiating mid-scene)
- Brief Questions (Lee: what are you on, who are you with, what health stuff; Mo: What do you like, what outcome are you looking for, what are your personal boundaries)
- The One Page Questionnaire
- The Extended Checklist
- One sided information sharing followed by yes/no of partner
- Ordering from the menu (pre-con fantasies, specific fantasy- awareness of consumerism v connection, are folks okay with that)
- Expecting Our Partner to be Psychic
- Check-in Negotiation/Yearly debriefs (not becoming complacent) – be open to shifting (or static) possibilities, reassess

## Setting Play Dates:

- Something interested in
- Okay if reschedule?
- Following through, be transparent if can't
- Show interest
- No means no
- Yes means yes
- Unsure/maybe = unsure/maybe
- Don't use maybe as a No, or you will be dodging them and be stressed. If you say maybe they may come back

## Things to consider as you Negotiate

- No to activity, or to person?
  - Difference between them saying no to an activity v saying no to you
- How you say yes/no/let's talk
  - Wow, I felt really good to have you ask me, but no thank you
  - Do you want to start a conversation, or end sharp?
  - Giving No's vs saying "maybe later" if you don't mean "maybe later"
  - Offering counter-suggestions when asked "can we do X" instead of just saying no
  - Finding middle grounds
  - Trading off desires (you do me, I do you)
  - Providing information when saying no (I'm not having a lot of energy tonight, but maybe we could talk online?)
  - Now, or not interested period (don't say not tonight if you don't want to keep hiding from them if this is the second/third night they've asked you)
  - No is NOT the worst outcome
  - No takes practice, learn to practice
  - Spending your energy saying YES! (what is your YES list v your limits list?)
- Don't make stories up if untrue, hard to keep lies straight, plus may infer other stuff (on rag = wait a week, not into rope = I want to do something with you other than rope)
- Don't negotiate than vanish unless \*have to\* for some reason, other party feeling crappy
- Twitchy bunny people- that person who looked destroyed at your No may always look that way; don't compare your insides to other people's outsides
- Avoiding people takes up energy, be clear
- Our fears around hearing No
- Our fears around hearing Yes
- Risks around compromising a relationship
- "But I have a friend you should meet" – if you meet someone and this occurs to you, being known for your rolodex; but don't just foist someone off
- Be polite/civil
- Be Compassionate (with them... and YOURSELF)