

Red Flags and Vetting Guide for everyone

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Introduction

Vetting potential play partners is an important step in the BDSM lifestyle to ensure your safety. This document provides an excellent starting point for anyone just beginning to explore the lifestyle.

While some red flags or questions may not be included, it is important to remember to trust your instincts; if something feels off, it probably is. It is also important to clarify that simply showing red flags does not automatically mean someone is abusive or toxic—it could be that they are inexperienced and the questions you ask them will help you understand where they are coming from. When meeting potential partners, it is advised that you do so in a public setting, never in a hotel room or their home.

Your safety is the top priority.

What are those red flags for everyone?

When you are not given space or freedoms:

If you find yourself being prevented from contacting friends and family, limited in your ability to contact other members of the BDSM or Kink community, and being discouraged from pursuing activities in the scene, it could be a sign that your Dominant/submissive partner is attempting to control you.

This can also manifest in social media blocking, whereby all communication is monitored and potentially blocked without you being aware. Be aware of these red flags, as they could be a sign of a partner's fear or insecurity that you may find something they don't offer or do.

When your feelings are not respected.

If your Dom(me) does not show respect for your feelings and emotions, it can be a huge red flag.

This can be demonstrated through a lack of understanding of your boundaries or an insistence on breaking down your will. Additionally, if your Dom(me) makes you feel embarrassed or ashamed, humiliates you in front of non-BDSM people, has major and unexpected mood swings, is overly jealous, or is unreachable for days or weeks, these are all signs that your feelings may not be respected.

If this is the case, it is important to set boundaries, or even consider leaving the relationship.

When the underlying relationship in a BDSM dynamic isn't taken seriously.

When BDSM dynamics are not taken seriously, it can manifest in different ways. This could include 'cheating' outside of the agreed-upon rules, not being clear on one's roles within the relationship, or refusing to discuss the direction of the relationship. Additionally, it can be damaging if one partner does not take the other seriously as a person, disregarding their opinions and ideas.

When someone does not play based on mutual agreements and responsibility

Unethical play arises when someone disregards the standard guidelines of safety, communication, and consent (SSC, RACK, PRICK, and CCCC). If someone does not engage in mutual agreements, or does not take responsibility for their actions, this is a red flag.

Additionally, if someone pressures you to do something without your consent, or makes you feel guilty for not complying, this is also a cause for concern. It is important to maintain healthy boundaries and ensure that everyone involved is comfortable and respected.

When someone seems to be very stuck in the role of a Dominant/submissive

If someone finds themselves stuck in a dominant/submissive role and unable to take responsibility for their mistakes, they may struggle to apologize or thank people in their everyday life. They may also act in a condescending manner towards people who aren't involved in the scene, such as cashiers, service desk employees, and gas attendants.

If someone finds themselves in this situation, it's important to take some time to reflect on why this is happening and consider whether there are underlying issues that need to be addressed.

When someone does not give the time to the person to grow in their role

It's important to be aware of certain "red flags" that may indicate an unhealthy dynamic or relationship when it comes to BDSM. If your partner does not give you the time or space to grow in your role, or does not respect safe sex or safe play (i.e. safewords), pushes you too quickly or too much into a D/s relationship, tries to hide behind the Dominant role when arguments arise, allows you to do things that contradict your personal limitations and preferences, ignores limits, negotiations, and contracts, or tries to top from the bottom to manipulate, then these are all signs that something is wrong.

People who do not have their own life in order

Having your own life in order can be beneficial not only for yourself, but for your partner as well. Failing to do so can lead to a multitude of damaging situations for both parties, such as attempting to borrow large sums of money, or even threats of suicide. Maintaining a life of order and balance can help you and your partner avoid these difficult predicaments.

Someone's general trustworthiness can be a "red flag".

When evaluating someone's trustworthiness, there are several red flags to be aware of. These include lying, not keeping information confidential, not fulfilling agreements, showing up late or at unplanned times, avoiding responsibility for mistakes, and alcohol or drug abuse. Paying attention to these signs can help you make better decisions when trusting someone.

When someone cannot handle their own emotions

If you are having difficulty managing your emotions, such as uncontrollable anger or panic attacks, it can be a sign that you need help. Struggling to have productive conversations without resorting to shouting, swearing, or blaming can also be a sign of an emotional issue. If you find yourself with someone who appears to struggle with their own emotions, it's important to offer them support and help, but recognise when it is also time to leave that relationship.

When someone has a lot of bad past relationships

If you observe someone having a pattern of bad past relationships, this may be a warning sign that something is amiss.

Signs to look out for include: a strained relationship with most family members, a lack of older friends, arguing frequently with exes, and exes having a shared feeling of being betrayed. Additionally, if a person gets quickly and intensely angry with friends or former friends and declares them enemies, this could be cause for concern. Lastly, if your partner is displaying a revengeful attitude towards those who failed to meet their expectations, this can be a sign that something is wrong.

When someone has a bad name or bad role in the BDSM community

Having a bad reputation in the BDSM community can be a red flag. Not participating or being overly critical of the community, as well as having a lot of newly established friendships, could all be signs that someone is trying to manipulate their way into the scene. This could be out of enthusiasm, but it could also be indicative of someone having difficulty maintaining relationships, which could point to more serious issues.

Other additional red flags

When exploring the world of BDSM, there are certain red flags that should be noted. These include:

- demanding that certain titles be used,
- wanting to collar someone straight away,
- not giving their real name,
- expecting a certain protocol to be followed,
- not wanting to meet other subs or Doms in the community,
- getting irate when a question is asked,
- not being available after hours,
- not allowing for a contract to be negotiated,

- unrealistic expectations,
- not caring about your mental and emotional wellbeing,
- saying they have no limits or wanting someone who has none,
- being interested in your kids,
- asking for something that has previously been expressed as a hard limit,
- not allowing the term "no" to be used,
- treating it as a game or short-term fun, or
- suddenly becoming unavailable or inconsistent.

Pay attention to these signs and be sure to take the necessary precautions.

Questions to ask while Vetting a Potential Play Partner

- Ask what kinks they are into. If it's just handcuffs and spanking, they are new and usually have no idea what they are doing?
- Ask what they want to achieve with their submissive/dominance, what is their role to them. If it's sexually based first up, they again are usually new.
- Ask what work they have done on themselves to advance their knowledge, who they look up to. (*50 shades of grey is not a handbook*)
- How did they get into the lifestyle, or what motivated them to follow this path. An honest person will openly tell you.
- Ask them to go through a kink/BDSM checklist or worksheet to list soft and hard limits, experiences etc.
- Ask them who they 'go to' for advice if needed or what websites, blogs or groups they follow to learn
- Ask for "references" from previous play partners or community members and run if they deny them.
- Ask if they are married or have another Dom/sub etc. Ask about them. Ask if they know and is it okay with them looking for other subs. Ask if you can talk to them.
- Ask them about aftercare, safe play etc. If they automatically state they don't use safewords or aftercare, ask further questions (*not everyone requires aftercare, but if they refuse the use of safewords or aftercare if it's something you need, then that's a redflag*)

There is nothing wrong with being new to the kink-lifestyle if you/they are willing to learn and grow into a role genuinely.

Do some research

When vetting a potential partner, it's important to research their reputation in the local community and to take a close look at their online presence. Ask yourself questions like:

- Are their posts angry or blaming?
- Do their politics match up with yours?
- Do they act inappropriately with people of interest?

Additionally, talking to previous partners or members of the community can be a great way to get the inside scoop. However, it's important to keep in mind that when relying on information from a small community, the answers you get may not be completely unbiased.

Ultimately, it's up to you to decide if a potential partner is right for you.

Questions to ask yourself as a Submissive/bottom

1. Does the Dominant use expensive gifts to get you to do something you honestly don't want to do?
2. Does the Dominant restrict you from having friends over or going over to see your friends?
3. Does the Dominant threaten to leave you whenever you tell them that you don't want to do something?
4. Does the Dominant make you feel guilty if you can't or won't do something?
5. Does the Dominant restrict you from contact with your family?
6. Does the Dominant get upset with you when you try and talk about the problems you are having?

7. Does the Dominant ever make you feel as if you are not good enough or that you can be easily replaced?
8. Does the Dominant ignore your medical or physical needs (this does not include the inability to see to these needs due to financial difficulties)?
9. Have you caught the Dominant in a lie?
10. Since being with the Dominant, have you lost or gained an excessive amount of weight (this does not include intended weight loss or gain)?
11. Does the Dominant make you feel bad if you question them?
12. Does the Dominant make fun of or belittle your religious beliefs?
13. Does the Dominant give you reason to question their honesty?
14. Does the Dominant go away for long periods of time with no explanation and refuse to discuss it with you or get angered when you ask?
15. Does the Dominant make you feel ugly or unwanted?
16. Does the Dominant attempt to force you to do things that make you feel uncomfortable?
17. Have you ever felt dirty or cheap after being with your Dominant?
18. Does the Dominant drink to excess or too frequently?
19. Have you ever felt like the Dominant is hiding something important?
20. Has the Dominant ever hit you in anger?
21. Does the Dominant ever tell you not to talk to others about your relationship?
22. Does the Dominant restrict you from speaking with their past slaves or submissive?
23. Have you ever been afraid to discuss something with the Dominant?
24. Has the Dominant ever threatened you or became enraged when you tell them no?
25. Has the Dominant ever given your services away without consulting you or without your consent?
26. Has the Dominant ever brought another individual into the relationship without consulting you or without your consent?

27. Does the Dominant demand to know your whereabouts at all times and still checks up on you?
28. Have others told you that you should be careful or expressed concern about the Dominant and your well being?
29. Has the Dominant ever talked bad about you to another Dominant?
30. Has the Dominant ever said that others are out to get them?
31. Have you ever felt like you were raped after having sex with your Dominant?
32. When have you questioned the Dominant have they ever said that they don't have to defend themselves against lies?
33. Has the dominant ever made you do something that you were physically or emotionally unable to do?
34. Since you have been with the Dominant, have you experienced an abnormal amount of depression or anxiety?
35. Since you have been with the Dominant, have you thought about committing suicide?
36. Does the Dominant make you feel that your opinion does not matter?
37. Does the Dominant punish you without explaining why?
38. Does the Dominant ignore your needs?
39. Does the Dominant express jealousy whenever you mention other Dominants or past relationships?
40. Does the Dominant take all your money and refuse to give you enough to cover your basic needs?
41. Does the Dominant participate in illegal actions, including the use of illegal drugs?
42. Have you ever second-guessed your decision to be in the relationship?
43. Has the Dominant ever questioned your loyalty when you question their behaviour?
44. Has the Dominant ever knowingly let you go without necessary medical attention or medication?
45. Have you ever felt lonely even in the presence of your Dominant?
46. Does the Dominant punish you publicly or in front of others?

47.Has the Dominant ever refused to speak about their past?

48.Does your Dominant ignore limits or safety words?

Questions to ask yourself as a Dominant/Top

1. Does the sub/bottom demand expensive gifts?
2. Does the sub/bottom get overly emotional when they don't get their way?
3. Do they demand all of your time, not allowing you to spend time with friends or family?
4. Do they threaten to leave you whenever you tell them no?
5. Do they demand your attention even when you are too tired or too sick?
6. Does the sub/bottom frequently compare you with other relationships they have had?>
7. Have you caught them in a lie?
8. Have they ever made you feel guilty about questioning their actions?
9. Has the sub/bottom ever used tears to influence your actions?
10. Have they ever told you that you are ugly or criticized you about your appearance?
11. Has the sub/bottom ever told you that they didn't wish to be seen publicly with you?
12. When you are at a group function, do they wander off the minute that they step through the door?
13. Have they ever told you to shut up?
14. Has the sub/bottom ever made up stories about you or told others things that should be kept within the relationship?
15. Have you ever felt like the sub/bottom has been hiding something important?
16. Have you found things missing unexpectedly?
17. Have you ever come home and found the sub/bottom missing, and when they finally show up, they are unwilling to tell you where they were?

18. Has the sub/bottom ever struck out at you or attempted any form of physical violence against you?
19. Have they ever betrayed your trust?
20. Has the sub/bottom ever threatened harm or suicide just to get their way?
21. Do they participate in illegal activities?
22. Does the sub/bottom quit talking to you or ignore you as a means of punishing you?
23. Have you ever felt lonely even when you are with your sub/bottom?
24. Have you become depressed or anxious since your sub/bottom has come into your life?
25. Does the sub/bottom get upset if they are not the centre of attention?
26. Have you ever second-guessed your decision to get into the relationship?
27. Has the sub/bottom ever begged or coerced you into doing something you are not interested in doing?
28. Did the sub/bottom beg you to be their Dominant/Top after only knowing them a short time?
29. Do they make you feel uneasy at times?
30. Has the sub/bottom ever refused to speak about their past?
31. Does your sub/bottom ignore limits or safe words?

Continuous Vetting in a Dynamic

Continuously vetting your dynamic is essential in ensuring you and your partner have a healthy and happy relationship. It is a form of evaluating your dynamic.

It's important to discuss whether you or your partners' needs have changed and what you want from the continued dynamic, renegotiate your contracts and reflect on any changes in behaviour. Asking yourself questions such as, "are my needs being met?", "has my partner's behaviour changed?" and "are our boundaries still appropriate for our dynamic?" can help identify any issues that may arise.

Doing this on a regular basis will ensure that any issues are addressed before they have a negative impact on the dynamic.

Red Flags don't always mean abusive

Seeing a red flag doesn't always mean that someone is abusive or toxic. It could be a sign that the person is still learning about themselves and how to communicate effectively. To get a better understanding of the situation, it is important to ask follow-up questions and clarify the issue.

When multiple red flags are present, such as feedback from others on their behaviour or unwillingness to discuss concerns or learn, then it's time to be more cautious. Everyone has their own boundaries and non-negotiables, and vetting potential play partners can help you find someone who meets your needs.

Final notes:

This is a basic guide, and not meant to be a comprehensive tool on vetting. Vetting is also very subjective and how someone vets and evaluates their dynamic can be very subjective.

We recommend reading other materials on vetting as well including from these recommend sites: [kynk101](#), [SubmissiveGuide](#), and [KinkCuriosity](#)