

Online Consent and Negotiation Lesson Planning by The Secret Subject

Introduction	<i>CONTENT WARNING: we are going to discuss the nature of consent which might come into contact with some touchy topics such as abuse, non-consensual play etc. If at ANY time you are uncomfortable, please feel free to leave the chat/stop the video and return at a later time. Protect yourself mentally, and keep yourself safe first.</i> <i>Who am I?</i> Cover who am I, where I learnt my craft and a little bit about my experiences online. <u><i>“A lot of this class will be from a mixture of outside resources and personal experiences. My experiences might be different from your own, but it’s no secret that a lot of what I’ve been through others have experienced too.”</i></u> <i>Why this class?</i> This became apparent that I needed to make this class because the community is so linked to online play. But unlike IRL it can be hard to navigate just how people take certain things over the internet vs face to face. Like when you text someone, the context around the message changes depending on who you are talking to, it’s the same with playing online. There are different things to think about when playing in the online space and this is what we are going to talk about today. <i>The Changing Landscape of the Hypnosis Community</i> Okay, so for years the community has been building its base online, and everyday we get to welcome new people into the scene. This is why it’s so important to talk about consent and negotiation. With each new person who finds their first play partners online we have to remember that they don’t always come into it with the knowledge of the IRL community or even the closely related BDSM scene. When I turned 18 I made my way to the IRC chat rooms, chatting for hours to strangers who I didn’t see, didn’t hear, only reading the words portrayed on the screen. Lately, things have shifted to discord, skype groups and social media like reddit, twitter and tumblr which is a little less depersonalized than the simple IRC chats. And places like Fetlife and Hypwatch put faces and more of a personal touch to the person behind the kink. However, with all this access to each other there comes issues of consent. Larger groups can cause peer pressure to say yes to things we don’t actually want or give certain people power over others due to follower counts. So, keeping all this in mind, how do we keep ourselves safe in the online hypnosis community as we grow in numbers and add new people and ideas? We can’t stop the growth of the community, but we can set our course to educating those who don’t know what consent and negotiation is. This way we can ensure the safety of the members in the scene and also pass down that knowledge of ethical and responsible recreational hypnosis for decades to come.
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What is consent and why is it important?	Consent What is consent? Put simply, it is an agreement between two (or more) parties, allowing for something to happen. For example, if you want to paint the kitchen of the rented house you live in you would need the consent of the landlord to do so. Or, in a hypnosis kink scenario, if you want to hypnotise someone to make them your slave you would need their consent to do so. This is the backbone of everything that we do in BDSM. Period. If you don't ask first or have an agreement in place for 'X' thing to happen then it won't be. You don't have a scene (hypnosis play) without some sort of guidelines or permission given first and how this looks depends on the type of relationship you have with someone. Why is this important? For a start if you don't ask permission or check the limits someone has first then you can get yourself into a lot of trouble. We are lucky to live in a day and age where people feel a lot better about reporting predatory behaviour. People who do things without asking and using the evidence they have from past experience to share details throughout the online world. If you don't gain someone's consent before hypnotizing them, and doing this repeatedly, odds are you will find yourself very isolated from the community, real quick. Also, think about your own sense of safety. If someone hypnotized you without asking, how would that make you feel? Not only will you probably have a terrible time but also you could find yourself waking from trance with bad feelings for the other person. Consent is the backbone of everything that we do. At a lot of conferences they give out pins stating it's "sexy", but really consent before play is mandatory. <i>What Types of Consent Are There?</i> <u>Informed consent</u> is consent that is given once all the information is presented. This is the type of consent that we use mostly as a guideline to our own kink play in the BDSM scene. This means that someone has agreed to the option for play that has been presented while they are in a conscious state (Go in DEPTH ON THIS) . It can only be given between adults in an erotic hypnosis situation and cannot be freely given if one or more of the people involved is intoxicated, impaired in anyway or coerced. A lot of people ask, "does this include people who are fractionated?" The short answer is yes. The long answer is a lot more complex and depends on who is involved. People will also talk about blanket consent or implied consent but those are different still and not as common (or suited) for casual play situations. In a BDSM or vanilla relationship, blanket consent is consent that is given without the need for intense negotiation due to knowing that person very well, and having limits and safewords in place. For example, my partner and I have blanket consent for certain triggers because she likes them and we have used them often enough to know it's something she wants, if she doesn't she has a safeword (red) to say. These types of relationships usually take a lot of time and negotiation to build up to. <u>Implied consent</u> is where consent is assumed through an action or a gesture. These are usually things such as people taking a 'maybe' as a yes or could be
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non-verbal like a nod or a handshake. Now, online (and in face-to-face kink) implied consent is really hard to navigate, because without a true 'yes' response from someone things can get confused very easily. It's like sarcasm, not everything works over text and it's the same online. IRL (in real life) you have the person in the same room so body language and the small nuances of their responses are obvious, you lose this over video chat, so it's best not to leave anything to chance. Regardless, if this is a new play situation you really must use informed consent in all negotiations. The best kind of consent for kink play is what's known as enthusiastic consent, it's also called a 'big yes'. This is when someone is excited to play so they give a yes that has a lot of meaning/enthusiasm behind it. When you get this, there is no guessing as to how the person feels about what you are going to do. There are some easy ways you can get this in a non-manipulative way, which we will discuss later on.

There are a couple of models for consent that is used widely throughout the BDSM community both online and IRL that those are:

- SSC: Safe, Sane Consensual
- RACK: Risk Aware Consensual Kink
- PRICK: Personally Responsible Informed Consensual Kink (Debated Why?)

Why Consent

Just like when you have sexual intercourse or BDSM activities, permission to play recreationally with hypnosis is key to all interactions. If you haven't gained affirmative consent for what you are about to do, you could run into issues or worse landmines leading to an abreaction. IRL this is easy as you can use a mix of body language, physical and verbal cues to determine how a person is feeling about the play, however this is not as easy over video chat or worse through text interactions. Anyone who can "mind read" how you feel from a text is lying, period.

So, let me tell you a story that happened to me. Remember this is my side of the story and there's more than one side to this one. *AUS Story*

From this I learned first hand the importance of consent. A lot of what happens in the ONLINE scene is pick up play, play with people you don't know IRL so it's more important to be cautious rather than sorry. Just as much as we give consent we can always withdraw it at ANY TIME DURING, BEFORE or AFTER PLAY (just because you say yes this once, doesn't mean that will happen again). Please keep that in mind.

Consent Online vs IRL

Playing online is both very different and the same as face to face. When we take our play to the web, we notice a big difference with the lack of being there. Now, this is fine for most play but what about when things go wrong? This is why when we play over the internet we have to be vigilant with our consent and how we negotiate. Here are some of the key differences between the two;

1. Over the internet you can't tell EXACTLY how another person is feeling. They could be having a really good time until a landmine is

	stepped on and you might not even know. 2. You can't physically help someone if they abreact. 3. Body language is taken away when negotiating, this is why when we negotiate online we have to be extra cautious to get an enthusiastic yes and a maybe is a no. 4. Aftercare - is something a LOT of people don't do because they forget or they don't feel responsible for the person after they leave the chat. HOWEVER this isn't the case. 5. It's easier to push boundaries online, because it's more removed. Some people feel that because the play is online it isn't as valid so they can do as they like without question when a person is under (give example). 6. PEER PRESSURE online is still a thing. You are less likely to run into this in the IRL scene versus the online scene. (in my experience) 7. Keyboard protection, people sometimes forget this is real life. Their personality changes when they are online so they can do things that they would NEVER do at an event or munch (give example) 8. Discord calls don't have mods/dungeon masters all the time to make sure a scene is going okay. We don't have time to police online chats all the time so who do you tell? Online is the wild west, there is no authority to say what is right or wrong just our own moral codes and knowledge of consent/ethics. Anything else? Discussion time <i>How Do We Get Consent?</i> Before engaging in ANY and ALL online play we need to do the following 1. Get the consent of the all person/s involved for any and all actions that are about to take place. 2. Get the consent of any onlookers or bystanders who might get involved or who are watching. 3. Negotiate in depth and let the bottom lead the discussion. <u><i>Why do we do that? Ask Audience DISCUSS</i></u> We have to make sure whoever we are playing with and everyone in the surrounds understands and is okay with what is happening, and if not they can be given some time to leave and come back later. Tea Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQbei5JGiT8
Discord/Skype/IRC spaces and the perils of peer pressure	<i>Why is Peer Pressure so Dangerous in Hypnosis?</i> *Ask the audience* https://www.theskylineview.com/showcase/2019/05/08/psychology-behind-peer-pressure/ It's midnight and you're at a house party. You're surrounded by acquaintances and strangers, who you hold no personal attachments to. You get up to take a swig of

Kombucha and then you see them. From across the room, the crack of the bathroom door is open, and you see your childhood friend snorting a line of a white, powdery substance.

Or, imagine it's 3 a.m., and you're driving with your friends and you would like to go home, but you don't want to disappoint them. They insist that you stay out a little more; you feel the disappointment as you try to turn them down.

Or imagine your boyfriend belittling you for not being into BDSM and trying to pressure you to "stop being so vanilla."

Peer pressure is rooted in psychological factors. Neuroticism — one of the five personality traits related to anxiety, self-doubt, depression and shyness — heavily impacts social influence during adolescence and even through adulthood. Someone who experiences intense feelings of doubt, anxiety and jealousy will be more easily influenced than someone who displaces confidence and awareness.

Beverly Muse, a licensed marriage and family therapist and adjunct psych services counselor, spoke about the psychological damages that arise from peer pressure.

"(Psychological factors) depend on what those damages are," Muse said. "The more we can accept ourselves, including some of the things about ourselves that we might want to change or we're not so proud of, the more grounded we can be."

Muse also expressed how people can overcome peer pressure.

"To recognize most people are putting us down so they can feel taller — and that doesn't really make them taller — we don't have to do what everybody else wants, we can be our own individual self," Muse said.

Peer pressure occurs through developing and impressionable young people. During adolescence, people start looking to their peers for approval or praise. This can lead to direct influence in the choices they make and the actions they take.

Muse said that someone's vulnerability to peer pressure can depend on their support system and the level of acceptance they have for themselves.

So as mentioned in that article peer pressure can use our vulnerabilities/people pleasing tendencies against ourselves and mean that we are more open to doing what people want even if it's not in our own best interest. Think about it, a lot of bottoms/submissives might find this hard because they want to please the dominant people in their lives and online this can turn into a powder keg. This is inbuilt into human nature and isn't something we can change, but we can change the culture of peer pressure. Now, I've been in a lot of online groups and I have also left a ton of them for predatory behaviour around peer pressuring of submissives/bottoms.

Example PP story

	So this is why we need to have limits. <i>Hard and Soft Limits</i> Made a video on this but in a nutshell... A good way to come up with your own list of limits is to talk kink with people or to head to fetlife and check out their big list of kinks. You'll soon know if something isn't for you and if you aren't sure MAKE THIS KNOWN. Now, sometimes we want to try something we aren't sure of or play that is risky. That's why it's important to have agreed on... <i>Safewords</i> These have been joked about by many people but they are an important part of any hypnosis play. A lot of people think that they are just for physical BDSM or play that is considered "edgy", but actually, everyone should have agreed upon safewords with their partner JUST IN CASE. Some people like to use abstract words as their STOP such as pineapple juice, or giraffe, but a system that a lot of people use is called the traffic light system. So, imagine a traffic light. We have green, this is our go, our enthusiastic YES! Then yellow, this changes for people so make sure you figure out what that means BEFORE the play takes place. Then we have RED, this is an absolute stop and check in with me. Now, like I mentioned for yellow, some people will use a different scale for which colour means which so its important to communicate this before any play. So, we have our limits set and our safewords agreed on, how do we escape peer pressure? This is the hard part and it really comes down to you being confident enough to be able to say no. If you are in a place where you can't say no, it becomes very confusing and difficult to play safely and keep yourself safe. Just remember, you are in control of everything and you don't have to do anything you don't want. *tell story*
How to Negotiate ONLINE	<i>Negotiating for Recreational/Erotic Hypnosis</i> The negotiation is a crucial part of any hypnosis scene, whether it be sexual, silly or otherwise it needs to be planned and discussed before the play takes place. This also means that during the play you stick to what was agreed upon and don't throw in things you haven't asked about. In order to do this you first need to know a little bit about the person you are playing with. Here is a helpful question checklist for those who would like reminders of what to ask;

Have you been hypnotised before? What was that like? Could you describe to me some things you enjoyed in the past? (Ask about reactions to suggestions/hypnosis in the past to make sure to be aware of reactions they could have with you)

Do you have any injuries that I should be aware of? (include a brief description of any trauma and past experiences that should be avoided, eg fear of water, heights, needles etc. Don't need to ask for personal details) Flopping/whiplash? How can you stop that?

Are there any places you would not like to be touched or that I should avoid? In an emergency eg. if I were to catch you if you were falling would it be okay to hold you in those places? Is there anything that could interrupt this? (Bad internet, parents, flatmates or siblings)

What would it look like/sound like if you were enjoying the scene?

What would it look/sound like if you were not enjoying the scene or in distress? (Ask for cues that are visual, verbal, physical) How would I tell? (This is a good time to talk safewords)

What are your safewords? (If they don't have ones agree on a system you will use in the scene)

Go through the process of the scene and ask them if they have any concerns, questions or queries of what is going to happen. LET THE BOTTOM LEAD

Double check limits.

Negotiating doesn't have to be boring and serious. You can make it more enjoyable by making sure to cover all the incidentals first and then discussing more in depth about some of the fun you are going to have. This can also then lead organically into the start of the scene if you are prepared and ready there and then, as the ideas you discuss could be used as part of an induction or a way to set the tone of the actions.

REMEMBER:

1. DO NOT negotiate with someone who is intoxicated, impaired or fractionated. (This is a tricky one we will discuss)
2. DO NOT USE NLP OR COVERT TECHNIQUES during the negotiation. If someone says yes while coerced it is not viable.

	3. People are allowed to stop the scene early if things aren't going so well. That's okay and it happens. Be nice about it. 4. Everyone around needs to be aware of what was negotiated if they are witnessing or part of the scene in some way, even if this is little. 5. No Up-Negotiating/ negotiating mid-scene. They are impaired. 6. Please check for any pet names or honorifics PRIOR TO THE SCENE so as to save embarrassment later. 7. Check in about safewords, if they can't recall basic things like their name, where they are or their safeword when you need them to, the scene is over.
Keeping Your Scene on Track	So sometimes things go off track from what was planned. When they do it is important to be flexible BUT also not to throw in things that haven't been consented to. Eg. *give life example BEACH HOT WEATHER CLOTHES* It's important to remember the agreement that you made to the bottom. Stick to what was agreed and not take it anywhere else. This is because if you start messing with people's boundaries before they are ready to shift them themselves, you might find that person not wanting to play as much as before. A lot of online play is based on personal relationships and those change drastically depending on how you, the person on top with the perceived power behaves.
When Things Go Wrong	What could go wrong online? Suggestions?
Aftercare in the Digital Dungeon	<i>How to aftercare online</i> 1. Talk, ask them about higher level stuff and lots of open ended questions after a scene. This gets their critical factor engaged again and also is a really great way to bond with the person. It makes you feel like you care (as you should!) 2. Depending on the scene you might want to give them check in texts/calls every day or so after the scene. This is because over the next week they could develop sub drop - low mood brought on by the emotional flood of the heavy scene or just being played with. 3. If they are fractionated, which odds are they are, make sure to give them time to drink water and get plenty of rest. If you are doing a long call, take breaks for food and water and if you notice your partner is getting exhausted/ overloaded you can stop and play again another time. 4. Ask! If you don't know what aftercare they need after a scene then ask, some people need more than others depending on what happened in the scene. Just because the play is online does not mean they DON'T need aftercare! It is just as important online as it is offline. This can be for either side of the watch by the way, some tops need aftercare too.