



## Consensual SM Activities: A Field Guide for Law Enforcement

The following is a handout prepared by The National Coalition for Sexual Freedom aimed at educating law enforcement on the realities of SM.

The purpose of this brochure is to provide law enforcement with a basic level of understanding about adults whose sexuality and lovemaking includes consensual sadomasochistic (SM) activities, and to provide information to assist you when you encounter an SM event.

### What is SM?

- One out of every 10 people you meet probably includes some aspects of sadomasochism (SM) in their lovemaking.
- The Kinsey Institute estimates that 5 to 10% of the population regularly participates in some form of SM. (1990 New Report on Sex)
- The American Psychiatric Association says that SM is not a psychological disorder unless it has a profound negative impact on other aspects of a person's life. (Diagnostic Statistical Manual, DSM-IV)
- SM is not new, nor is it restricted to the big cities. Consensual SM activities have been performed throughout human history. SM people come from all walks of life, and can be of any race, gender, or sexual orientation.
- Adult consensual SM does not feel like it may look. Media stereotypes are wrong. While the media usually portray the dominant or top (the "sadist") doing whatever she or he wants, without regard to the desires of the submissive or bottom (the "masochist"). In reality, the bottom has the final say.
- SM requires consent from all the parties involved. Without informed consent, it is not SM -- it is abuse. Safe, sane, and consensual play is the standard of the organized SM community; it relies on the use of a "safeword" that allows the bottom to stop the action at any time.
- Children are incapable of giving informed consent. They should never be part of SM activities.
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### SM vs. Domestic Violence

- "SM always requires free, informed consent of all parties involved." Here's what distinguishes SM.
- SM is consensual. Each participant consents freely to the activity and each is free to leave at any time.
- SM partners ask for and enjoy making love this way. Participants don't apologize for what they do with each other, instead they are happy and satisfied.
- SM partners take great care to make sure that their activities are as safe as possible. Local and national SM groups stress the importance of "safe, sane, and consensual" SM play, and frequently hold educational meetings on how to engage safely in these activities. SM does NOT feel like it looks.