Mental Health for Alternative Lifestyle Attendees

Understanding: What to Expect & Self-Care (28Mar24)



What to expect

Consider what to expect in a dungeon setting with BDSM. Being aware may help you have a better time!

We have extremely positive outcomes in dungeons, yet we and our alternative lifestyle communities must constantly overcome these inherent challenges:

- **Being alternative:** BDSM, Kink, non-traditional sexuality & relationships, integrated neurodivergence.
- **Body trauma:** Experience with physical abuse, assault, societal stigma.
- **Generational trauma:** Passed down histories of oppression, discrimination, abuse.
- **Non-conformity:** By definition, this community challenges societal norms, and feels personal impact resulting from such challenges.
- **Repression/Oppression:** Legal sanctions, pathologization, social stigma, discrimination, loss of employment, individual experiences.

Dungeons may have extreme stimulus:

- **Noise levels:** high level, unexpected sounds, background music, conversation, screaming, impact sounds.
- **Visuals:** unusual, dim lighting, intense scene visuals.
- **Crowded & constrained:** crowded rooms, movement, many people moving about, potentially dangerous objects.
- **Smells:** change and mix, human body odors, cleaning chemicals, etc.

Dungeons may have emotional intensity:

- Positive mental states, cathartic, endorphin-induced experiences.
- Triggers or recollection of repressed memories, anguish.
- BDSM can evoke strong or unanticipated emotions including excitement, arousal, fear, vulnerability, confusion, anger, (and more).
- Mild to strong headspace changes may alter perceptions.
- This can occur during and after play.

Communication challenges may occur:

- Misunderstandings, mistakes, etc.
- Unclear consent and boundaries.

Self-Care

What do you need for self-care at events? Everyone is different. Consider what works for you!

1. **Quiet Space.** Find it when you're overwhelmed at an event. Take breaks.
2. **Dungeon protocols:** They help prevent issues. Rules, safe words, consent, dungeon monitors, etc.
3. **Set boundaries:** Both physical and emotional, in your negotiations and setting consent.
4. **Aftercare:** Use it. Negotiate it. Who will provide it? How long? Follow-up the next day/week?
5. **Know Your Limits:** Listen to your body and mind. If something doesn't feel right, it's okay to step back or ask for help.
6. **Communicate Openly:** Don't hesitate to communicate your needs, concerns, or boundaries with your trusted community including play partners and dungeon staff.
7. **Take Breaks:** Give yourself permission to take breaks whenever you need them. Rest and recharge if you're feeling overwhelmed.
8. **Seek Professional Help:** If you're struggling with your mental health, don't hesitate to reach out to a therapist or counselor who understands BDSM dynamics. See resources on the other side of this flyer. Ask others you know.

Mental Health for Alternative Lifestyle Attendees Resources (28Mar24)



Local Resources (New Mexico)

- 988nm.org – Call 988, press (1) Veteran's Crisis, (2) Support in Spanish, (3) LGBTQIA+ Support, or online support at 988nm.org.
- https://nmcrisisline.com/, 1-855-NMCRISIS (662-7474)
- Agora Crisis Center, UNM, 505-277-3013.

National Resources

- 24-hour Crisis Lines: 1-800-833-2900, 1-800-273-TALK
- FetLife, Group, Psychology & BDSM, https://fetlife.com/groups/5852
- Human Rights Campaign
    - LGBTQ+ Community, https://www.hrc.org/resources/mental-health-resources-in-the-lgbtq-community
- Kink Aware Professionals (KAP): https://www.kapprofessionals.org/ (search area around your zip code)
- Kink Aware Professionals: https://www.kapprofessionals.org/ (search area around your zip code)
- LGBTQ+ Hotline: 1-888-843-4564
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- National Coalition for Sexual Freedom (NCSF)
    - https://ncsfreedom.org/resources/
    - https://ncsfreedom.org/sexual-freedom-resolution/ includes this: "The best contemporary scientific evidence finds that consenting adults who practice BDSM, fetishes, cross-dressing and non-monogamy can be presumed healthy as a group. We believe that any sexuality education or therapies that treat sexual problems must avoid stigmatizing or pathologizing these forms of sexual expressions between fully informed consenting adults."
- TASHRA, The Alternative Sexualities Health Research Alliance, https://www.tashra.org/.
- CARAS, Community-Academic Consortium for Research on Alternative Sexualities, https://www.carasresearch.org/.
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
- Trans Lifeline: 877-565-8860
- *Search for additional online resources, support groups, social media communities, etc. that may help you.*

Training about Mental Health for Laymen

- Adult Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/
- NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness, https://www.nami.org/Support-Education/
- YouTube. Search for yourself. Be careful about validity of content!
- Many Crisis Centers around the USA take volunteers, and train volunteers. This can be a source of training if you are interested. Example:
    - Agora Crisis Center, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, http://www.agoracares.org/.

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