

KINK & BDSM

Basics Information for Therapists

WHAT IS KINK?

Kink is an umbrella term that refers to a variety of sexual and non-sexual fantasies, fetishes and activities.

Kink is often contrasted with “straight” or “vanilla” sexuality and behaviors. A fetish is sexual attraction to objects, body parts or situations not conventionally seen as sexual. Kink is also used to refer to one’s unique or specific sexual propensities, such “I have a kink for high heels”.

The acronym BDSM is a compound abbreviation.

Bondage & **D**iscipline (B/D)

Dominance & **s**ubmission (D&s)

+ **S**ado **M**asochism (SM)

BDSM

WHAT IS BDSM?

BDSM is also many things. Some BDSM activities may or may not include sexual experiences. In the broadest sense, BDSM usually incorporates some form of restraint (bondage), pressure, sensation or elements of power exchange (non-erotic and erotic) such as dominance and submission. Some people do not associate kink with sexuality at all. You may find that some people object to the term BDSM which was derived in part from a mainstream medical model which has stigmatized these behaviors.

As with all sexuality, kink and BDSM are consensual.

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WHO IS KINKY?

Some studies report that at least 9% of the US population has engaged in some kind of kink sexuality at least once. **ANYONE CAN BE KINKY.**

What are the unique issues of kinky clients?

- marginalization, stigma and social obstacles
- internalized oppression and shame
- identity and coming out issues
- understanding deeper issues related to power dynamics
- understanding and articulating limits, needs and interests
- agreements, negotiations and consent within kink relationships, play scenes and other interactions
- lack of knowledge and understanding from the world

What are the gifts of kinky sexuality and relationships?

- deepening self-awareness, connection, sexuality and self-expression
- intensified communication and skillful relating
- exploring altered states and power dynamics
- opportunities for personal growth, self-knowledge and reflection
- celebrating diversity and living one's fantasies
- gaining an appreciation for the wisdom, strength, and courage that each partner discovers while navigating uncharted waters

WHY DO KINK-IDENTIFIED CLIENTS COME TO THERAPY?

People who identify as kinky or who are exploring kink or BDSM may want help to:

- Work through personal identity issues and define themselves accurately
- Understand their kinky impulses, wishes and needs
- Resolve feelings of guilt, shame, self-criticism, self-hatred or lack of acceptance
- Negotiate consent, and/or standing up for their boundaries, needs and limits
- Identify abusive and self-destructive behavior or relationships
- Navigate the coming out process and issues
- Work on relationship conflicts or issues related to kink/BDSM and a vanilla partner's needs

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WHO IS A KINK-FRIENDLY THERAPIST?

A kink-friendly therapist:

- provides a safe place where kinky clients can explore the unique difficulties they face in meaningful ways
- explores their own personal ideas, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and biases with regard to kink and BDSM
- develops and uses “meta skills,” or feeling attitudes, of open-mindedness, curiosity, acceptance, compassion, exploration and celebration of diversity

- realizes that people who identify as kinky, or who are in kink/BDSM relationships, may be judged, stigmatized or pathologized by society, family, friends, co-workers, professionals, public institutions and their community
- seeks and applies knowledge of the unique issues of kink/BDSM clients and requests consultation or supervision when needed

A directory of kinky friendly and aware professionals can also be found at Kink Aware Professionals (KAP) www.ncsfreedom.org/key-programs/kink-aware-professionals/kap-program-page.

WHERE CAN I EDUCATE MYSELF ABOUT KINK & BDSM?

Kink & Poly Aware Chicago Therapists (KPACT)

www.lifeworkspsychotherapy.com/what-we-do-2/supervision/kink-poly-aware-chicago-therapists

National Coalition for Sexual Freedom (NCSF)

www.ncsfreedom.org

Projects Advancing Sexual Diversity (PASD)

www.projectsadvancingsexualdiversity.org

Community Academic Consortium for Research on Alternative Sexualities (CARAS)

www.carasresearch.org

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WHERE CAN I GET TRAINING AND SUPERVISION FOR WORKING WITH POLY CLIENTS?

LifeWorks clinicians are **sex-positive, kink and poly friendly and aware**. We have many years of experience working with diverse relationship constellations, issues and conflicts. In the spirit of recognizing and welcoming diversity, we strive to serve and honor each individual as a unique and whole being deserving care, respect and confidentiality.

Lifeworks sponsors the **Kink & Poly Aware Chicago Therapist (KPACT)** group that offers support, networking, dialogue and other resources to clinicians who seek to become kink aware & friendly. For more information on KPACT, contact cindy@lifeworkspsychotherapy.com or visit www.lifeworkspsychotherapy.com/what-we-do-2/supervision/kink-poly-aware-chicago-therapists/

LifeWorks offers individual case consultation, ongoing supervision, seminars and workshops that support professional development. Please visit our website or contact us for more information.



Rami Henrich, LCSW

I believe you already have what you need inside of yourself to have a meaningful life, to solve and resolve problems, to be joyful and content. As a therapist my job is to help you access a deep sense of knowing your own source of creativity and your true nature. I see myself as a facilitator of inner and outer relationship processes.



Cindy Trawinski, Psy.D.

I believe psychotherapy is one way to learn, to grow and to bring more awareness to our day-to-day lives. The whole of life can be an adventure full of experimentation and learning with the right attitudes and skills.



Pat Cochran, Psy.D.

When you engage with your struggles, it may lead to a shift in attitude, even though nothing on the outside may change. Engagement is at the root of all lasting or profound psychological change. I undertake a journey with my clients towards an openness and receptivity to the very things they would rather move away from, and instead go deeper into them and perhaps develop a new capacity to life within their struggles, seeing them in an entirely new way.

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