Twitter Thread by Femme Loves■■■



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I’ve seen lots of people defending porn and BDSM on this website recently, and a lot of other people critiquing them for it. I feel like both sides miss something important that the other side has to say. I usually stay out of this debate, but I feel quite strongly about this.

The critics of BDSM have many things right. The fact that BDSM is used as a smoke screen by abusive men who murder their partners and then blame it on a “sex game gone wrong” should appal all right thinking people.

Pornography/ 50 shades have mainstreamed many of the more extreme practices of BDSM, including choking and anal. This mainstreaming has not brought with it any understanding of consent, or how to reduce the risks associated with more extreme practices.

This has led to young women being pressured into painful and humiliating sex acts that they do not want, did not ask for, and do not understand, without having any trust in their partner to carry out the acts safely, or even with regard to their own desires. This is appalling.

Many defenders of BDSM would agree with all of this. No really, they would. The argument is that if you are pressuring an unwilling partner, murdering people, if you are a dom who has no concern for your sub’s experience, you are not practicing BDSM, you are being abusive.

I hear many critics of BDSM argue that *they* would not be capable of enjoying pain or humiliation during sex, and therefore *nobody* would be capable of enjoying pain or humiliation during sex, so therefore any sex that contains pain or humiliation is abuse.

Leaving aside for a moment *why* somebody might be capable of enjoying those things, this argument is false on its form. People enjoy different things. What feels like pain to one person might be pleasurable to another. Think about running – painful, but pleasurable.

One person might like to have their lip bitten, another one might like a back scratch, people are different and experience sensation differently. Worth reemphasising that this does not extend to the abusive asshats we discussed further up this thread. I’m talking “vanilla” still.

People might like different types of emotional experience during sex as well. One person might like to feel looked after and taken care of. Another might enjoy emotional depth, another "letting go." Another might enjoy the conquest. There’s no one way to feel about sex.

Isn’t it conceiveable, then, that some people actually do enjoy/ get off on humiliation? Both on the receiving end of it, but also on the dishing it out end. Of course it is. But then the question is, why? And what does that mean?

Don’t get me wrong. I don’t think that it’s optimal human flourishing to need to have your finger in a mousetrap, or to have to pretend that you’re being raped, in order to come. It very often speaks to trauma.

Dissociated people rubbing up against dissociated people, numbed by trauma, just trying to feel something. I was heavily into it myself when I slept with men, because I had to be, to feel anything about it at all. I used to tell people this:

“If you are wearing a blindfold and your hands are tied behind your back, it doesn’t matter what gender the person is who’s spanking you. I’m definitely bi.”
It was a tool of dissociation that allowed me, a lesbian, to engage in sex with men I didn’t like. Not healthy. Not good

There was a context, though. If you wanted to find somebody who was into that sort of thing, you had to go, physically, to clubs or parties. There was a community. That community really did look after young women too. I was warned off particular men, for instance.

Men who were new were usually taken aside and given the low down, told about consent, and boundaries, and about harm reduction. Harm reduction is HUGE, actually. Everybody is talking about choking at the moment, and it horrifies me that nobody knows about this.

If you don't know about harm reduction, look it up. The basic message is, ok, you have this maladaptive behaviour that's not optimal for human flourishing. Let's not judge it, let's look at how we can reduce the harm it does to you in your life.

So the teenager who cuts because she needs to feel SOMETHING would be encouraged to hold ice cubes instead. The alcoholic who gets in bar fights should drink at home instead. BDSM should be practiced as safely as possible, in a way that reduces the harm.

If you have to do breath play, start with a hand over the mouth and nose instead of choking. If you have to feel constricted, use your body weight/ lie on top of them. The fact that nobody is saying this in the debate is absolutely shocking to me.

Old school BDSM practitioners regard even vaginal or oral penetration, even with fingers, as being almost sacred, and not to be undertaken lightly. Choking and anal are regarded as very extreme, dangerous practices.

If somebody turned up at a club, back in the day, and said “I’m into choking and anal, and I don’t know what harm reduction is” they would be spoken to, and if they persisted, turned away. The conversation is not like this online.

Instead, anime avatars are explaining that it’s perfectly possible to choke somebody safely (no it’s not) to complete fucking strangers on the internet, when they have no clue about whether they even have the desire to do it safely. It boils my blood.

TL:DR so far – abusive men using BDSM as an excuse/ smokescreen to be abusive is bad; mainstreaming of extreme, niche BDSM practice is bad; young women being pressured is bad; none of these things are BDSM practice. Harm reduction is a great tool in any area of life.

In my view, the strongest card in the critic’s arsenal is this; why do you like to humiliate/ hurt/ be humiliated/ be hurt? Some people know the answer to this, and still practice BDSM. Others find out the answer and no longer want to. I’m the latter.

I had a very weird childhood, and my family of origin is messed up in layers, like an onion, layers of hurt and wrong and secrets and lies. I learned from them that love is suffering, and that there’s no point reaching out for love, it’ll only hurt.

I learned to dissociate, and to never say no to men. I learned that I do not have permission to explore my own sexuality, or my own identity or my needs, instead I must do what men want me to do. I carried others’ burdens.

Experimenting with BDSM as a sub gave me that permission; in short, if I pretended I wasn't consenting, it left me more free to let go of whatever I was holding on to.

Exploring more extreme physical sensations was also helpful in breaking my dissociation at times.

I don't practice BDSM any more, and it's been years since I've looked at any porn. Turns out that all I wanted was somebody to really see me, right where I am, and love me there, and make me safe.

It hurts my heart to think about that hurt kid I was.

The Hebrew word for salvation can be translated as "coming home," and in that sense, she was my salvation from so very much.

Violence has no place in my marriage or my homecoming, and whatever else BDSM is, there's no denying that it's violence.

I wish I'd never found it.