

Final Result: Why Didn't They Safeword

Content Warning: Personal stories, potential mention of non-con situations. We may mention different types of dynamics, including 24/7 and M/s and CNC

Introductions:

bendy (she/her) is a heavy sadomasochist who lives as the s-type in a 24/7 irrevocable consent relationship, and is particularly skilled and practiced at long-term relationship negotiations.

Kat (she/her) is a pro-domme, digital artist, and music producer. Kat specializes in subjects relating to the occult, mindfulness, and gnostic trance, and they enjoy integrating those subjects into their personal practice.

Daja (she/her) has been involved in the hypnokink community in multiple capacities for the last 13 years. She has taught at multiple erotic hypnosis conventions across the country and edited the educational resource book Mind Play (2017 and 2021 editions) by Mark Wiseman. She has co-organized the Pittsburgh hypnokink group PHARMA since 2017.

Dragontize (she/they) is a person who really likes hypnosis, and sometimes writes things for ReadOnlyMind.com. After a lifetime of playing with trance on their own, they finally found the hypnokink community in 2020. They enjoy gushing about all they've learned.

Mazirian (he/they) has 30 years of experience with kink. They are an experienced teacher who brings their passion for hypnosis to the classroom and encourages active learning.

Official Moose of Canada (they/them) has been involved in sexual health education more generally since their teens. They are a super subby submissive and subject, but they have more recently been spreading their antlers as a hypnotist! They are also a total mental health nerd and bring a trauma lens to this particular conversation.

Why we thought this was an important idea to do a panel/presentation about: there can be many reasons why a person does not safeword. Some of them can be benign, "I wanted to be better/stronger/tougher for my top/bottom" or benign-ish, a neurodivergent person just not realizing they've reached their state of done-ness.. and some of them may be darker, a bottom's trauma response has been activated by something.. This panel felt that it would be useful to come together and discuss all the reasons why sometimes people do not safeword.

Panel objectives:

- Creating a better understand of safewords and their intended use
- Understand and develop empathy for the many reasons it may not be used as intended in reality
- Start to think about some of the ways we can shift how we interact in our varied relationships to make them safer spaces for us and others to express their needs and have their needs be valued and respected

1. Panelists' Brief Definitions of safewords? What do safewords mean to you?

[Kat] Yeah, to me a safe word is a system that you've set up with a partner or partners that just lets them know that you need to. Pause or you know stop the session and there's a lot of in-betweens and it can be a word it can be a signal. But essentially I was to boil it down, that's only what I would consider a safe word.

[Daja] For me, it's a communication shorthand to quickly get something more complex across when you can't. Or don't have the time to put that more complex thought into different words. Or, you know, the signal if you're nonverbal or gagged or, you know, etc.

[Dragontize] A safe word is a word that can get the play partners attention no matter what we've been saying before. They stand out because we learned to listen for them through dungeon noise or to strands or whatever head space we might enter. So that if something needs to stop or change, these are words that can make that happen as soon as possible.

[Mazirian] I don't think I really have anything to add other than maybe. We can have agreed upon safe words, but they're sort of universal default safe words no and stop. That works just fine when you don't have an agreement in place first.

[Official Moose of Canada] Yeah, I don't think I have anything to add, other than just to echo no and stop are perfectly valid safe words unless there is an agreement around those words in particular.

2. Why might we use safewords?

[Kat] So for safe words, I mean, you could say yes or no. And a lot of situations sometimes, without even thinking and a kinky or sexual situation, especially if it's something CNC and a safe word is something that stands out that says, you know, pause, something's not right, we need to stop this, and a situation it might be because a rope is pressing on a nerve or. You know, somebody might feel a seizure coming on. There's so many different reasons why someone could safe word, even just starting to have a flashback if you have a trauma history and you

need to take a break from that session, just for a minute. So yeah, they're used for a lot of different reasons. And I think that. And most dynamics it's good to have them even in some dynamics though people function without them I think it's good just to have as a safety net because you never know when something might come up and she might be glad that you've established that.

[Daja] Why safe words rather than full sentences? Because it can be hard to articulate things, especially when we're in altered states. We're hypnokinksters so hypnosis itself can make it hard to talk and having a couple of short words, red, yellow, whatever, that quickly communicate an idea can be really useful. If you've got agreements for check-in words that show excitement and enthusiasm with one of my partners. We use lavender for greener than green. Because of reasons that were silly at the time. That can also be very useful for communication that you're really enjoying something even when physically you might not be showing that because you're tied up and you can't promote or you're just that relaxed or whatever.

[Dragontize] If “stop” and “no” are the default safe words, that’s OK. But also, we want to be able to say things and make noises that would normally mean something needs to stop or change. And have that expression be available to us and still continue doing what we’re doing. Safe words are useful for that. okay, if I’m saying “no, no, no”, that actually means go ahead. But if I say red, that means “Actually no. Definitely no, this time”. And I wouldn’t normally say a color when expressing pain or intensity. So having those available gives me the freedom to communicate or express as I will while still feeling safe and secure in the knowledge that I can stop or change things if I need to.

[Mazirian] I the thing that Daja mentioned about how safe words can start to branch out into more vocabulary. I mean, part of the point of them is to have something that's simple and easy to use when it's urgent, and so overly complicated long lists of things are not something I'd recommend. But for example, some people use blue to distinguish medical issues from not wanting things to continue for example and that way you know “oh I better make sure to give them something to help their blood sugar” because that's, you know, what you need to have at hand for people when or whatever it might be that their medical situation is likely to be.

[Official Moose of Canada] Yes. I was very engaged in what Mazirian was saying. Also I think it is really important to have safe signals when “no” and “stop” might not be available. If, for example, you're gagged or very deep into hypnosis and you're one of those people who has a very difficult time talking in trance. So if safe signals “no” or “stop” are unavailable for any other kind of reason, having non verbal safe words is also really important.

3. Why/when do we use safewords (both tops and bottoms)? Your best IRL example of stopping/pausing things..

[Official Moose of Canada] Yeah, I have a Very good example. This one time when I was doing things with my partner that involved oral. And just because of positioning and everything, it just so happened that my nose ended up also covered, while I also couldn't breathe through my mouth. And again, because of positioning, it was really obvious that my partner was not aware that this was happening, and wouldn't be able to see it. And because that wasn't the intention, we hadn't negotiated for that, and we hadn't agreed on some kind of safe signal for that. But because I, you know, wouldn't normally be tapping on his leg the way that I did, he understood that there was at least something that he needed to check it on. Which was great because accidental breath play is not what anybody wants. You want that to be intentional if you're gonna do it. So that's probably my best example of the time when I needed to stop or pause something.

[Mazirian] I think in things that hurt, I've had more than once probably where trying to calibrate how hard is the right amount of hard to be doing whatever the thing is, like, you know, maybe you're checking in and saying, oh, you know, "what number is that on the 1 to 10 scale" or whatever. But sometimes you go up to 10 or beyond while you're still trying to calibrate, and then the safe word is a very quick way to say "oh, okay, that's too hard, let's back down a little bit". So it can just be a nice shorthand communication for "that was a little too hard" and that's happened a couple times for me.

[Dragontize] So my most common reason honestly is being misgendered. I very frequently say "yellow" in response to being called "she" or "good girl". I also said "yellow" in my first impact scene to give the top an idea of what intensity to save for the finale or to strike below that level. And I've had to call "red" because I hit some spicy nostalgia, also known as PTSD. And I needed to process that instead of continuing play.

[Daja] Well, as a top I've had to effectively safeword on a partner because they were pushing further than I knew their body should be pushed in the moment. The details aren't super relevant but it's something we had talked about before the event. As a sub, I was doing a scene with my now spouse. We were not yet even engaged at the time. But we were doing a hair pulling that we had done a fair bit, but in a different position than we usually did. And that position tripped hard into a trauma trigger I was not expecting to have tripped. This is one of the only times I have ever actively gone non-verbal. Thankfully he is a wrestling fan and he knows tapping means help or stop. So I was tapping on the floor that I could reach and he took that as a safe signal even though we hadn't discussed it because I had never gotten nonverbal on him before. So. You know, it was a very good "Oh fuck, what just happened?" moment.

[Kat] So as a top, I was working, you know, doing paid work and I had a client and we had already chatted, done free talks before about, you know, medical history, is there stuff I should be aware of, limits and all this stuff. And I had to safeword because they were looking very uncomfortable on their knees and they were shifting a lot, there was something just not right about it and they weren't on their knees for long, but then I told them, we're gonna end this for a second and have a little chat and it turns out they had a double knee replacement 6 months before and they didn't think it would be an issue. And they thought pain was part of the process. And I was like, not that kind of pain. So I was really glad that I ended that. And as a sub, definitely a PTSD thing, with hypnosis I sometimes struggle with relaxation because it's tied to a lot of different trauma stuff and I've had to safeword quite frequently. When just words bring up the wrong thing.

4. Examples of situations where safewords should be used, but sometimes aren't? Or stories of when we did not use a safeword as a top or a bottom

[Official Moose of Canada] I've got a few examples. There was one time that I was doing a hypnosis session with somebody. And there was one thing that we were doing that I hadn't necessarily thought about potentially doing with somebody before. And so I was sort of hitting up against this that I hadn't known was there, and that I wasn't even necessarily sure of, in the moment. My hypnotist was looking for a particular response from me, and was encouraging me to do that particular response louder, and I was saying, "No, I don't wanna do it louder, because my partner is asleep and I don't wanna wake him up". And that was being ignored. And so, I thought, well, if he's not listening to that then he is not really gonna listen to anything else that I have to say. So in that scenario I did not end up using a safeword. And then, I don't know if this is a scenario when I should have used a safe word necessarily, but definitely one of the limits that my partner and I have agreed on and is that when I'm doing hypnosis with other people, pet names are off the table including "Good girl", "good boy", whatever. And so there was one time I was at a Speed Trance event. And we had decided we were going to do something that was highly praise-based. But the subject didn't have a lot of ideas around the types of praise that did fall within my limits. And so, what ended up happening was once I had dropped them, I was really, really, really having a lot of trouble coming up with things I could use as praise that did fit within my limits. And like, there were definitely points when I felt a little bit trapped and felt if we're gonna continue this I don't know a way to do it without, essentially, crossing my limits. And I ended up just kind of awkwardly repeating that they were a good subject. And then it was over. But definitely, had it been in a different context, that would have probably been a scenario in which I just didn't safeword and felt really uncomfortable because I knew I knew what the subject wanted and I really wanted to be able to give it to them. That was sort of

the main reason that I was very hesitant to safeword, because I wanted to do a good job.

[Mazirian he/they] Yeah, I think there's so many reasons why we don't safeword. I think I used to often harbor the belief that, as a bottom if I safeword it would be upsetting to my top and then they might not wanna play with me more and I would tell myself all these stories about that. And so even in situations that were kind of uncomfortable hypnosis things that were going in a direction that wasn't really what we had negotiated, I was still a lot more likely to not safeword, if I, you know, overall was having a good experience with the person too. Just be like, well, I'll just deal with it. I have some agency, so I can just kind of not really go in the direction that they're leading here and it'll be fine. And in the long run, that's way less healthy for a relationship than making the decision to speak up; and that kind of communication is good and if you have a good relationship, they're going to appreciate it and not be upset with you. A lot of those kinds of messages to myself about why not to safeword that aren't really true, but still felt they were. And then another one that I kind of struggle with is the feeling when I'm omitting details because I don't want to have to preface things with a bunch of trigger warnings. So, the sort of situation where it's a thing that if we had talked about it, I would have said yes, but doing it without having talked about it felt really uncomfortable and not great. But I actually wanted the thing. I just wanted to have talked about it first. And so it kind of felt wrong to say, "no, stop. I don't want to do this" because I actually did want to do it. And so those kinds of mixed feelings about it in the moment are the ones that leave me with a lot of "Man, I wish I had made the decision to speak up about it in the moment."

[Dragontize] I have 2 that I prepared. The first one was my very first time in a harem style scene remotely during the pandemic. I realized only after it was happening that I was uncomfortable hearing the other bottoms' sounds of pleasure. I just hadn't been in that situation before and even though consciously I knew that they had consented to me being there, they had their mics on, you know, they knew what I could hear and they were okay with that, maybe even excited about it. It still felt I was intruding on them somehow. But other than that, I was really enjoying what was going on. Everyone else was clearly having a great time. And I didn't want to interrupt or spoil the fun for them. And of course, afterward, when they found out about this, when I finally came clean about it a week or 2 later, maybe they were all kind of offended that I hadn't trusted them with that and they encouraged me and kind of playfully made fun of me even, "No of course your needs and what you wanted are valid and important and we want to hear about that. We want to know how to make this better". And of course I feel especially silly, because we were doing this on Discord and I could easily have muted all the rest of them and still heard the hypnotist because that's a feature that Discord has. I didn't know about it at the time. But if I'd just spoken up, there was a very easy fix for this so that everyone could enjoy what we were

enjoying, but that's how I felt at the time. Also, I'm asexual with the hypno fetish, so a lot of times sexy things turn me off. And I feel bad or prudish about that, even though I understand now that it's also just part of my orientation and who I am. And I don't want to inadvertently shame someone for being sexual or for being interested in whatever is happening or enjoying explicitly erotic or sexual things. And so I often don't want to speak up. A lot of people don't seem to understand that a kinkster myself can exist or understand what a sexual orientation actually means. And so I worry that they'll just conflate my orientation with purity culture or sexual shame, and not want to hear about it. Shut it down, invalidate it. And so I get scared sometimes even when I know I'm among people who are going to understand. I've had to get better at navigating these feelings and get better at speaking up about it and just not being ashamed or embarrassed to be the way that I am, even when it's not the way that other people are. After that situation, I also conditioned myself to say yellow automatically in response to unexpected negative emotions. Because I felt that would cover most of the situations where I should speak up but might feel embarrassed or hesitant.

[Dragontize] And for the other story. I was at an event and I had played with this person remotely a couple times, casually. But this was my first time meeting him in person. Here is what happened. I went first in a Koala Box game. The way this game works is they'll draw a hypnosis scene idea out of a hat, and then ask for a subject volunteer, and then ask for a hypnotist volunteer. And you usually negotiate in a hurry and fairly minimally, especially if you already know the other person and feel you know what they will and won't about a thing. So the two of us were the center of attention for this, during my first in-person event ever. Right after the pandemic lockdown. I'd been alone, remotely doing things a lot. And the two of us had chatted privately beforehand about what, in general our likes, limits and goals were, for this event. And we had agreed that we weren't going to do anything sexual. And we weren't going to do anything BDSM. But we hadn't really dug in enough to what that meant. So back to the Koala Box game. He started doing this hypnosis scene and I started feeling really submissive and really dominated. And for a second, I considered if I should speak up. But I wasn't feeling any negative emotion that would cause me to safeword. I felt great, this was awesome and I wanted to keep doing it. But also, I felt worried or maybe guilty because this felt it was him crossing his own line. Because he had said we wouldn't be doing DS and now I was feeling really subspacey. Maybe that was a problem? And I guess he saw something in my face. So he immediately adjusted to make the scene more gentle, more caretaker, "okay, you feel really safe, you're protected". Which made me feel more subspacey and then the cycle repeated a few times, until we were done. And of course the two of us talked about it later when we were alone together. And he felt that I should have spoken up. He reassured me that it's OK for me to interrupt a scene if I am worried about something, and let him know so that he can adjust accordingly. And also,

apparently my submissive feelings were fine, he was only worried about submissive poses or titles. So because I wasn't calling him "sir", or kneeling or bowing to him, everything was fine. And of course, I'm still to this day a little upset with him for not checking in, because that was our first time playing in person together at all, ever. And I feel adjusting to an unexpected nonverbal cue is something that you do with someone that you know well enough to know what the interpretation of that nonverbal is, and even then, usually you should stop and check in. It's a great skill to have as a hypnotist to be able to pattern in a different direction or adjust and keep the person in trance and I that when I'm with someone who is an established partner that I feel safe with, and I wouldn't mind getting to that point with him, I think, but we weren't there. And now I don't know if we'll ever get there. So that's a situation where it was on both of us, where he should have stopped and checked in, and I should have safe worded. And if either of those things had happened, we both could have enjoyed exactly what had been originally intended, and I could have had a great experience. It was good anyway, this wasn't a devastating PTSD-causing situation, but it's embarrassing in retrospect that I didn't take conscious control, that I relied on a pre-installed safety I had given myself rather than waking myself to speak up. As I'm constantly telling other people they should do. But also, yeah, he should have checked in.

[Daja] Before I get too into anything, just want to say that if anyone has ever given any of y'all a hard time about ace in kink, and coexisting in hypnotinky spaces, let me know and I'll go yell at them a bit because they should know better by now. My couple of stories are gonna come from when I was very new. I was new to hypnokink on the whole and had not yet learned the art of hypnotee agency. So my first partner, who wasn't a regular partner in any real way, was trying to push me into something that did not feel safe or ethical. But he was ignoring me saying no, repeatedly. At which point my brain decided, "well, if he's not listening to no, he's not going to listen to anything else". Which he won't have because, when I called him on it later, he admitted he had stopped seeing me as a person because of our DS dynamic. Yeah, that relationship then ended pretty quickly. We were both dumb kids. Him more than me in this case. I hope he has grown out of it by now, but I don't know. I blocked him on everything. So he's not in my life.

[Daja] The second one, I was more concerned with someone's reputation as an educator, and had not yet been confident enough in my own skill, to be willing to call someone who is known as an educator out on poor behavior. But he had been told before that a suggestion that to me that I would then want to hypnotize someone else, anyone else including him is as the case may be, was a hard limit. He had been told this by one of my dear friends as he was trying to give it to me once upon a time. He stopped at that time, so later at a hypnotic munch that we were both at, I let him use my brain for a demo. And he tried to give that

suggestion to me again. This was a year later, but still. And. I didn't safeword at the time, but I did talk with him after, and my brain was like, yeah, no, I'm not doing that. And I thought he had learned his lesson. No. He did this again a few months later, and I still didn't safeword on him, because I still didn't want to cause a scene during the demo. I know better now, and I would be less afraid of causing a scene, but those are things to keep in mind too. Someone who's in front of a group may not be willing to quote unquote "cause a scene" if they don't know that it's okay to do. Especially in the class, because people don't want to derail a class.

[Kat] My story definitely is about when I first got into hypnosis. Which wasn't really actually intentional. At the time, I was just curious about it, because I've done mindfulness for years. I taught classes on it. Lot of experiences a pro domme, but I just thought hypnosis is a placebo thing or social pressure. I thought, I have enough control over my mind as someone who's taught stuff on mindfulness and meditation, so there's no way that somebody could influence me. But it turns out that I'm actually really suggestible and it's probably because of a lot of my mindfulness stuff and all of that. And at the time, I was in an unhealthy dynamic. A very toxic dynamic with a person. And I think this is a good example for why you should screen your partners. Time had gone on and I had wanted to safeword on something, and I was trying to nope out and he didn't stop. We haven't really established safeties, but he felt that we had safeties in place. And he said that I asked him to make it so that I wouldn't consciously remember that I have safewords, but that whenever needed, whenever I'm really unsafe, I would use them and he convinced me of this. So I went for quite a period of time, very uncomfortable in a lot of situations, waiting for these magic words to come up in my brain. When in reality that was just gaslighting, and that conversation hadn't happened. And I think that I was vulnerable to his gaslighting, because of my not having education on subject agency, and coming into hypnosis completely as a newbie, and being taught by someone that was really abusive. This was really hard and also I had witnessed other people in that dynamic going through a similar thing. So at times where I would consider myself not the main person in the scene. But not necessarily a top either. For example, one of the girls was getting punished for just saying something "out of line". And in the middle of the street, in a public area where we could be seen, he made her get down on her knees and like, it's feet, which were disgusting and I was so uncomfortable that I knew that I couldn't safeword even though I wanted to, because anything that would have happened after that would have been much worse. I've never had trouble safewording out of a session as a professional Dom. I've never had trouble outside of a hypnotic dynamic, and it seems a very isolated thing when I was learning. But I think that in hypnokink, people should really read more about it. And if you don't think it's real just because you don't think something works, it does it mean it won't work on you. So, I kinda think, a lot of those issues could have been avoided had I not been so over-confident.

[Official Moose of Canada] Actually, what Mazirian said, reminded me of one more thing. There was a session I did a little while back. I had negotiated with the hypnotist. And I also keep notes. And so there was one thing that was sort of on my list of things that I thought would be really fun. But I had a note that this thing is in my yellow section on my likes and limits list, which for me means it needs more negotiation. And we could have talked about why that's there. But then we didn't end up talking about that, and the hypnotist brought it into the trance anyway. And so I was actually justifiably annoyed that the hypnotist brought that into the session when there was literally a note that if we're gonna do this we need to negotiate it more. I honestly don't really know why in that moment I didn't safeword, and instead, I ended up just using my agency to edit the suggestion. I think sometimes it can almost feel easier to use your agency and edit the suggestion instead of having that difficult conversation with someone. Especially in that type of situation. And depending on whether you intend to play with that person again.

[Official Moose of Canada] The other thing that I think is just really important to talk about as a reason people might not safeword. So this is actually not a hypnokink or even a kink example. This was my first ever sexual experience, at age 18. And there were things that happened. Like, "oh, you didn't listen to my no about this. So you're not gonna listen to it about other things either". But also, I remember I put a lot of pressure on myself because I felt this was something that other people my age should be doing. And I think especially when we're young, especially when we're new, there can be a lot of that internalized pressure of this type. If other people me do this and it's no big deal, then I should be okay with it, too. And yeah, that's nonsense. The things that you want and don't want are entirely up to you, and what other people might want or don't want is irrelevant unless they are in the scene with you. And yeah, so that's just something that I thought was important to bring up.

5. Reasons you / people in general might not use a safeword?

[Official Moose of Canada] There's so many reasons that people in general might not use a safeword. Sometimes we don't know that we've run into a limit. And sometimes it doesn't actually hit us until afterwards, when we realize "wait, that actually wasn't super okay". And so of course, if we don't know in the moment that things are going wrong, we aren't gonna to safeword. I know there have been a few scenarios that we've talked about, where people were kind of like, "oh, if you didn't respect my no for this thing, then you're not gonna listen to it for other things either". So definitely if we have a belief that the other person is not going to respect that safeword, sometimes it can feel that there's no real point. Sometimes we can get into such an altered state, particularly if we're really deep in subspace where we don't necessarily realize that we're doing too much. Because we're not necessarily feeling sensations the way that we normally

would. Yeah, those are definitely a few things that come to mind that haven't all been mentioned yet.

[Daja] I could think of a handful of reasons people don't safeword. For example, people who have been punished for drawing boundaries in the past, whether in or out of kink spaces. One of the things I have run into are people who have experience in the past, whether as kids or in previous relationships, that their boundaries are ignored. And unlearning that lesson can take time. But it doesn't have to be abuse. That's just the most obvious. Someone in the chat mentioned bottoms that melt down if the top safewords. That's a form of emotional punishment, whether it's intended or not. You call yellow on something, does that result in the scene just being stopped entirely and treated as a red? So on and so forth. There's a lot of ways punishment for drawing a boundary can look. And I'm sure a lot of us have seen it in other ways. Maybe I say "don't talk to me that way". And my partner responds with "Fine, I won't talk to you at all". That's another common example I have seen. All of these ways teach people that it's not worth the effort to draw a boundary. Why would I safeword? It's just going to be more work than it's worth. "It doesn't matter what I want because it won't be respected", is another lesson people can learn. So there's that, another one that I have seen is being so into an alternate head space that the action itself may not cross a line, but the consequences of that action would. But the person is too deeply in an altered headspace to realize what the consequences will be. This could be something like a green to be hit with a certain implement in a certain region, like taking a cane to the thighs, when they are going to be wearing a bathing suit at a pool party the next day. And maybe on a normal day, caning on the thighs would be lovely and fun and they'd enjoy it. But they can't have those welts when wearing a swimsuit. But they are too deeply in subspace or too hypnotized to remember they have that pool party the next day. That's a quick example off the top of my head. Or maybe they've not done this thing before and it's something they want to do, but they don't have enough presence of mind to realize that in this environment, it's not going to be good for me because of X, Y or Z. Things like that. So I also build off of that if someone doesn't know that they're playing with someone under the influence that might be a situation.

[Kat] I agree with a lot of the things already mentioned and also want to elaborate on specifically when people don't maybe when to say a safeword. There's people who are very completely new to kink. It's their first time doing anything. And they just think the whole experience is supposed to be like a medieval torture chamber. Like they're supposed to suffer. And there's a lot of discussion that goes into what is good pain and bad pain, and what is expected. But it's also important to cover what type of pain and sensations are normal and, might happen and then where, what type of pain and sensations might be a red flag that you should let your Dom know that something's happening and you told me about this thing so I'm just gonna tell you I'm gonna stop it, or I'm gonna pause it

because especially with something like rope work, there could be nerve pinching, all kinds of things like that. So just simply not being familiar with body sensations could result in a bottom not safewording. Also, on the subject of intoxication. Being intoxicated or in altered mindsets. Particularly, I think sometimes there is an intersection of kink and drugs that happens and if, for example, someone is on psychedelics or something during a session. They might decide to change what they said they wanted, to something that you would normally do together but that they made clear they didn't want to do that night, before they took this substance. So I think as a Dom in that situation, you would have to step in and say something. Because the person themselves wouldn't safeword. So it's up to you to really remember what somebody wants while they are in their head space, and how a substance they've taken might affect their ability to receive pain and how they register it.

[Daja] Where that person who isn't under the influence of a drug would safeword, but they don't know that they should be.

[Kat] I think it's really important to disclose if you're intoxicated and what substances you've taken, just for medical reasons in a session, because you never know what medical thing could happen. I don't want to shame anyone who plays like that. I just think our reactions are really important when you start mixing kink and substances.

[Daja] But also, everyone should be able to consent to playing with someone who's intoxicated, because they may not feel comfortable with that, shame or not.

[Kat] Exactly.

[Daja] No shame involved, just, you know, I don't spend much time around people who are intoxicated. I don't know what signs I would need to look for. I do not feel I could be a safe top in that situation. But also being too fractionated to consent is also a type of altered head space that people may not know to flag.

[Mazirian] I think everybody else already said better than I would have, pretty much all the things that were on my list of things to mention here. I think a couple of people have sort of mentioned the idea that even though it may not be true, you may have the fear about your partner being upset if you safeword and you may decide not to. Because of that fear. I think somebody else suggested using safewords in lower stakes situations. To get used to and to normalize that safewords are just a type of communication. And a couple of people have also alluded to things along lines of anticipating a big emotional response whenever you safeword. For example, they may say "oh my gosh I'm the worst person ever I can't believe I did the thing that made you safe word!" and now suddenly it's all

about them. When you were safewording because there's something you needed. And that's not gonna be productive to engage in that, and so you just don't safeword and that's not good.

[Dragontize] We talked about a few things that I had in my notes like I wasn't really allowed to have boundaries growing up. I was expected to obey my parents because, you know, 10 commandments and things. And that meant that the skill of asserting a boundary was not one that I'd really had. I am learning as fast as I can, now. I think I've made a lot of progress in the last 3 years, but it definitely was new and exciting for me in a lot of ways, even in 2020. I think I started noticing that about myself in maybe 2018, so it's been a journey. I think if somebody just hasn't been used to speaking up, they might be expecting you to read their mind, or expecting you to know what the right action is in a situation and that if you're doing this other thing, well, you must know that it's upsetting them and be doing it anyway. So what's the point of speaking up? So that's definitely a reason for not safewording. And then there is wanting to be regarded as tough or that you're a power bottom who plays on the level of other people, when we are supposed to do this to have fun. So if that level isn't fun for you, then you should be accepted playing at the level that is fun for you. But yeah, people might not safeword because they want to impress others. Or in my case the biggest one at first was just inexperience. The first kinky hypnotist I ever met was an abuser and I knew nothing about kink. I spoke up a few times about not wanting things, but it didn't occur to me to say "red" or try some other way of getting my "no" across. I just didn't know that existed. So it wasn't something that I realized was an option. So it's best not to assume that the other person already knows what the universal safe words are and what they mean, or that they can do that or know when they should. And then other than that. Yeah, we mentioned worries that the other person might not respond appropriately, the fawn response and other trauma responses are big reason people may not safeword. We had an entire another panel on that, in fact. Sometimes especially people who have had to accept things they don't want, in order to survive situations before. Outwardly, they may be smiling, and they may be saying, "yeah, yeah, this is good", but like their smile might not touch their eyes or like they're nodding but they don't actually mean "yes", that's just how they respond to fear. I have a friend who was in a situation that she really wanted to stop and inwardly she was going, "no, no, I don't want this. I don't want this suggestion. I don't want to be in trance right now", but she did not safeword because that's how she'd survived other things before, and afterward she was really upset both with herself and with everyone else present for not somehow knowing and stopping that. But she just wasn't able to safeword, because of her trauma response. So that's definitely something that we need to be aware of. Also, accept yourself if you didn't act the way that you wanted to act and understand that there are a lot of reasons for that and it's good to dig into why it happened, but we need to not beat ourselves up about it. Trauma responses and just upbringing and lack of skill are a big one.

6. How can partners foster trust?

[Official Moose of Canada] I think one thing that is really helpful is remembering that boundaries are not only a thing in kink or sexuality or hypnosis, they're a thing in all of our interactions in our day to day life. One thing that I think is really important is practice. And we have so many opportunities to do that. If we're not playing with someone as a one off, if it's someone who we also hang out with. Then we need to communicate our boundaries about smaller things with them, with fewer emotional stakes. Even in day to day interactions, we can say "I don't like when you talk to me like that". Or, for example, in the kitchen, I can't deal with mushrooms being really slidy. It's a sensory issue. So that's one of my boundaries and I'll ask my partner if he doesn't mind doing the mushrooms if I do the rest of dinner. And I get a sense of how he responds to those kinds of boundaries and how best I can communicate those kinds of boundaries. So these day to day interactions give us a lot of practice. And this builds trust along the way so that then, when there are things that have higher emotional stakes, we've already practiced how to communicate our boundaries and needs.

[Daja] For me, what has worked, both learning to trust other partners and I think has helped them trust me, were things like engaging not just with what the boundary is, but also the why? So if a boundary is, "hey, I don't like being touched in this specific way". Okay, why? What other things are going to brush up on that, so I don't just avoid that touch but also similar things; or "Hey, I don't like being expected to be Dominant at someone on command". Okay, what's going on? Maybe it's because people have expected you to perform roles before, then we'll take this as "whatever energy you bring is the energy I re-engage with and where your head goes is where it goes". Things like that. So you are not making them nickel and dime every boundary, everything that makes them uncomfortable, but really showing that they care where my comfort levels actually are, about what makes me feel safer. And remembering that, and acting within those boundaries, not the explicitly stated ones that they're used to having to fight for. But the meaning underlying that; if we talk about that meaning, it can go a very long way. But also, yeah, showing that you care about those boundaries, not just when play is involved. That you see or are seen as a whole person. Such that it's not just about what you were getting out of the play relationship, but about the connection with this person, that is a really big deal.

[Kat] For me, I think it's interesting. One of my partners and I were in a dynamic where we didn't really have that trust with each other and one of the ways that we've been establishing that trust, was a lot of praise when safe words are used, because we were never praised when we used them in the past. Past partners always encouraged us to feel bad if we used them. So now, when my partner uses safewords, I'm very proud of them. I'm going to give them the same amount of praise if they were to submit to me in a way that they're consenting. And that's

been really helpful even for me. When I set a boundary and all of a sudden, I just get tons of praise. This is lovely. And it's the same in kink and out of kink. For me, I feel that's been really effective. Everything everyone else mentioned. Obviously, I agree with that, but in particular, I think trust is just knowing that you'll be celebrated even if sometimes you have to safeword or if something makes you uncomfortable. Trust is just knowing that the other person will be understanding of your needs and is actively encouraging you to use safewords to communicate your discomfort.

[Mazirian] Building on what Kat said, I think there was a point where somebody just told me if somebody safe words just start by saying "thank you". And I think at first I didn't really get why that was a good idea, but over time it's pretty clear that you're grateful that they feel safe communicating with you, you're grateful that they told you that something was uncomfortable so you can make it better for them. Yeah, you know, but just coming at it from that position of gratitude that they feel like they're in a position where they can communicate with you. I think it helps a lot to build that for all the reasons Kat was talking about. And also, once you've started building trust about safe words, you can do much higher risk things because you've built that trust in the fact that, yeah, if something is going wonky or they're not feeling good about it or this kidnapping scene has them scared in an actually bad way instead of a good way. That they'll speak up about it, then you can go for it and try and see what happens. And also, talking about the importance of safe wording to make both people feel safe, and framing it in a positive way like that, I think is also trust building, which I guess was supposed to be the topic of the question I'm answering, but you can build trust by saying "Hey, this is an important tool that we need to be able to rely on". And you know, it's a mutual thing. So let's build it together.

[Dragontize] So, going back to something. You mentioned that it can be really good to understand why someone's boundary exists or the reasons things you might not realize are related. I definitely agree with that. And also. One thing that's been really helpful for me and my submissive husband, because we both kind of grew up in situations where boundaries were not at all respected and we weren't able to build this skill. We both frequently start explaining before the other person even objects to our boundary? And we're trying to build the habit of interrupting each other and going, "Look, you can explain if you want to, but you don't have to. I don't need to know why you're saying no in order to respect that. I don't need you to justify to me. Needing what you need, liking what you like, wanting what you want. I'm just going to respect it because I respect you".

[Dragontize] And also. Learning that sometimes explaining can send the wrong message, even though you know we want to respect each other. If I say "no, I don't wanna go get groceries because I need to keep this ice on my chronic pain". He might say, "oh, okay, we'll bring the ice pack with us". When really what

I needed to say was “no, I don't want to go get groceries with you”. Full stop. No is a complete sentence. And we'll get into this unfortunate pattern and when that becomes a thing in kink where if someone states a boundary and then the other person picks at it, like there's wanting to understand it so that you can respect it and then there's wanting to understand it so that you can get around it. And the latter can be a big problem. And it's good to foster trust by understanding each other and wanting to discuss this enough that you find something that's mutually enjoyable. But sometimes it can be difficult to find the balance there between okay, well if you don't want to do x, let's do related y but also like. Yeah, not triggering them just by discussing it or by making them feel like you're trying to get around it when really you're trying to understand it. A lot of fostering trust is just building it up little by little, especially in people who haven't been able to feel safe trusting someone in emotional intimacy situations before. Or dangerous situations, you know. If they understand that I respect this boundary that doesn't bother me or that isn't going to limit my enjoyment, then hopefully they'll feel more comfortable expressing one that might. Like, oh, you really want to do this? Well, I don't want to do that. You know, like I want my partner to be able to say that. So as we've mentioned praising. Reminding them before a scene that you like it when they speak up, that you want to understand what they like and don't like. It's good to have that feedback. Ask for feedback. After a scene or even after a difficult conversation, to say, okay, well, what was good there? What could be improved? And then just pouring acceptance and validation on anyone. As much as they can stand it. So that they understand, oh, okay, in this context, this is good, even though I've had to survive where this wasn't accepted and appreciated. And then being open with your own feelings, as much as is appropriate and wanted, so that they'll feel comfortable opening up as well. And being clear and direct. I have a really hard time trusting someone who implies what they want or don't want, instead of stating it directly. Because I am too autistic for that shit. I will not notice that something is bothering you if you're saying, “oh yeah, it's fine”. And so I've gotten to where if someone says, “oh, it's fine”, I'm gonna make sure whether it's actually fine. And try to encourage them that “no, it's not rude to be direct. It's not rude to tell me you don't like that. It is in fact exactly what I need from you in the situation”. Or we won't be able to do the intense things that you want me to do. And just, you know, speaking up about any problems while they're still small. It can be really scary for those of us who haven't had that experience before. Or especially like a sub to a Dom that they want to impress and have play with them again. No, tell me when the problem is small, that way it doesn't become big. So I think fostering that trust is in both directions, both sides need to speak up when it's small, because then I'll trust that if you say you're enjoying something, you really mean it. And also, if the other person responds well and reacts appropriately when I speak up about a small thing. Then I'll feel more comfortable doing it the next time. Whereas, if they react negatively, that's going to undermine trust, because now I'm going to be more afraid to speak up the next time. Because speaking up becomes this huge

emotional labor. So yeah, just clear and direct. Minimize the emotional labor involved, but praise them for putting in the effort.

7. How can you empower yourself to do more of this kind of communication?

[Mazirian] I think a lot of it came from other people safewording. And feeling that I've practiced feeling and expressing that gratitude to them. It feels really good when they safeword, because I know they feel safe communicating that and we can build a better scene together. So then, I can tell myself all the same messages that I want my partners to understand. I can also in fact understand these messages myself, with some work. I think that's kind of the main path for me. Thinking about why I should safeword feels hard, but thinking about why other people should safeword and then trying to copy that. Feels a lot easier.

[Dragontize] Yeah, I definitely second that. There have been a lot of times when Moose or someone else has had to say, well, what would you say to so and so if they were saying the same thing that you're saying now. "I would accept them and validate their feelings". So yeah, that's a nice trick for getting around black of self acceptance. Just sort of imagining yourself in different situations and sort of feeling in your body, what is your subconscious response to that? While I'm just sitting in a room presumably safe around other people that I feel safe reacting around. Does this feel red, yellow, green? Does this feel like something that I would want more of, or something that I wouldn't? And obviously, you can change your mind once you're in the situation for real. But I find that very helpful for rehearsing like, okay, if somebody brings this up, I'm going to say no, but I might suggest this related thing. And that way I'm aware of how I feel without all of the social pressure. And also, giving yourself seen feedback. So maybe writing it up. Maybe just talking to yourself or thinking to yourself about how things went, what you enjoyed, what should have been different. Again, the same way that I might for a partner. But in this case, tuning in to what I experienced, by myself, so that I'm not feeling those pressures.

[Dragontize] And just practicing asserting boundaries appropriately in all areas of your life. Like we talked earlier about. Being expected to accept foods that we don't like or drink alcohol when we don't wanna drink alcohol. Vanilla culture can get really creepy about that stuff. Finding ways to put yourself and your limits first in those situations, even if it means, "okay, well I'll be back to hang out with you, after dinner. Okay, well, I had a great time. Bye. I'm not hanging out at this party anymore where you're all trying to get me to drink". You know, sometimes it's, "well, if you can't meet my need, then I'm going to have to go meet my need on my own". Practicing that in situations where the stakes are hopefully lower. And being aware of your own trauma responses, whatever those might be, how to

mitigate any danger they present and if needed, seek professional help learning more helpful responses. Especially when we just haven't built these skills, it might be necessary to do so. The same way that you'd hire a mechanic to fix something you can't fix in your own car, you might need a therapist or a social worker, someone to help you unlearn your previous coping strategies and learn some new ones. Or find friends that you can rehearse this stuff with. I found that very helpful. For example, if I know I'm going to see someone who is a bit of a bully, but I still want to go to this event that they might be at. Okay, let's, pre-figure-out what I'll do if this, that, or the other thing happens. Especially if you've been punished for asserting what you like and don't like. I think in some cases if we've hidden responses from ourselves, we would feel it in our body necessarily having the emotional response. Someone mentioned kidnapping earlier. We don't need to get into the details, but that can be triggering for me. And for the longest time I would just go numb when kidnapping was mentioned. I would want to share in the joy of the person who was talking about a concentual scene that took a bunch of planning and was really fun for them. And I would kind of force my own feelings and responses to the back. But when I think about that now, I can feel myself starting to shake. I can feel a tightness in my chest. Learning what those physical responses are like can maybe help with tying them back to emotions. You know, "I feel fear", "I feel disgust", "I feel anger about the situation that happened, that led to this trauma trigger". Even though for the longest time I couldn't feel. And when it was happening, I just felt confused and sleepy. I think those exercises can be helpful. And I think that there's a lot of stuff in DBT and some self-improvement stuff in CBT by which in this case I mean "Cognitive behavioral therapy"? There are a lot of exercises that can help with that. And I think that if you don't know how you feel about something, it's going to be really hard to know whether that should be a limit for you. So it's a really good idea, as much as is feasible, to explore these things and work on these things. The DBT workbook is so helpful. Just taking the time to tune in to yourself and to work on your own recovery is very helpful to understanding how you feel and setting boundaries.

[Official Moose of Canada] In terms of things that we can do to empower ourselves to safeword, I think the really big thing is practice. Practicing asserting our boundaries. It can be really empowering even if it's something as small as "Oh hey, like I was gonna sit in that spot on the couch, do you mind moving?" Small ways of practicing both receiving and asserting boundaries.

I will tell one story with permission. There was one time when a friend was talking about some of their own stuff, and I really experienced that as a comment being made about me. And so I approached them later and I said, "hey, this was kind of upsetting for me". And then, because I talked to them, they were able to clarify and it turned out they didn't mean that about me at all. And also, now they know that if something is bothering me, I'm gonna tell them. Which makes it a lot easier

to accept when I tell them that something is bothering me because they know that I have a history of telling them if something is.

Remember that asserting boundaries is about building trust with your partner, and with your friends. And presenting that to yourself that way gives you that little extra boost of motivation to practice. Because ultimately it is a skill that we should be using whenever we need to. Barring a situation compromising our safety, if we do so. The only way is through a lot of practice, and a lot of self talk. I'm allowed to have boundaries and lots of limits. My limits don't have to be the same as anyone else's. As long as I'm respecting other people's limits. Because they don't need to influence what my limits are. Because once we're used to just doing that when we need to, it's a lot easier to continue doing it.

[Kat] So this question feels really fresh because I exited a dynamic where it kind of completely undid years worth of building myself up. So I feel like over the last year and a half now I've kind of been relearning a lot. And I think reminding myself and giving myself permission to take up space because I realized that was a thing, that a lot boiled down to the fact that I didn't wanna take up too much space. I didn't wanna inconvenience someone, and I didn't want it to be noticed that I did something wrong, because then I would get in trouble. I have been reminding myself that it's okay to take up that space. And also, my own disclosures around some of the things that have happened in the abusive dynamic I left were very public. I received so many messages from people, talking about similar situations. I've been giving people advice based on things that I had been doing to get over things or to remove suggestions, to help them leave their own abusive situations, or to help themselves after they left.

I couldn't give this advice without also living it. Every time I face a situation to set a boundary and I would be fucking hypocrite if I didn't acknowledge that I have to sit with this discomfort, too. When I'm feeling that I'm taking up too much space and that my feelings aren't valued or wanted or needed, and I need to sit with that discomfort, and face that it isn't true, it is trauma-based. And I need to remind myself that my feelings matter and my comfort matters and anyone worth playing with me will value those things. So I spend a lot of time reminding myself of that. And also finding community support, because I think when you're playing with people that are healthy, and interacting with people that have healthy dynamics and healthy communications, it becomes easier. Because you're supported by different people around you all the time, when you set a boundary or a limit. And I think really making sure your environment is a good environment is very helpful to reevaluating relationships where maybe you don't feel respected. For me, that is how I've empowered myself by reminding myself that I'm not just helping myself with this process, I'm also helping other people by practicing these things myself. I'm better able to help people who come to me with similar issues. So I don't know if that's true for everyone, but for me, it's just reminding me of the

bigger picture, that even if in a moment, I don't feel like I can believe that my consent matters because of all my trauma, I'm reminded that I just told like 10 people today that absolutely their consent matters. So I just have to sit in my discomfort and say my safeword. And then it feels better after.

[Daja] One of my tricks is journaling about why these things matter to me, it helps just getting it out of my head and into something I can see. So that makes it feel more real to me and therefore easier to act on. It's not gonna work for everybody but it has been a very big one for me and it's something I encourage people to at least try doing. And the why doesn't necessarily have to be, you know, this is a boundary because trauma dump as much as it can be things like "this is a boundary because it makes me feel unsafe". That's enough of a level of why for it to help me. The other big thing for me was framing it in a context of if someone didn't safeword for me, I would feel hurt and I don't want to hurt the people I'm around. I understand there's plenty of reasons people don't safeword, that's why we have this class, but I would still feel a little hurt that they didn't feel they could, and I would wonder what I was doing to make them feel like they couldn't. And I don't want to do that to the people I care about. So therefore I owe it to them to safeword when I need to. And that reframing really helped me get over the not safewording at first, and then the more you do it, the more comfortable you get with it.

8 & 9. How can the tops empower the bottoms to safeword? And: How can the bottoms empower the tops to safeword?

[Mazirian] That one I have an answer ready to go for, yeah. Maybe this is more of a D/s context than a top/bottom context. But telling your partner that it is an act of obedience to safeword for me. Because I want you to tell me these things. So as part of our dynamic, I want to tell you that this is what I want you to do. That's all I got.

[Dragontize] I have definitely used that one. In a professional context, I've had people, you know, begging me to give them some kind of order. And I'm like, okay, tell me your likes and limits. Okay, fill out this kink list. Okay, name me 3 things that you don't want. In a long-term dynamic, I don't necessarily like that. Because I do eventually want them to be speaking that out of their own power. But yeah, starting with it as, okay, this is how you obey me. You speak up, you tell me what you're experiencing. That can be very helpful, especially for the inexperienced. And I think we've talked about it before, praising them to the limit that they can stand, anytime they safeword. I remember one time I was on a discord server that does a lot of consensual non-consent hypnosis things. And the young lady I was playing with. Her bus got there and she said, "oh red, I need to stop the scene now. My bus is here. I'm gonna wake myself up so that I can

get on the bus” and I thanked her and praised her. And she was surprised and even started crying because it was like the first time anyone had done that and she had been really scared. She was sure I was gonna be disappointed, I was going to even be angry. And I was like, “no, I’m proud of you. This is good. This is important”. And if I’m going to play in a space like this, I need to know that people will safeword, because I don’t want to make you miss your bus. I don’t want to make you so spacey in public that people think you’re on drugs, you know. Safewording is really good. And in fact, that kind of scared me out of playing in that space. The fact that it was so unusual for her? Cause I feel like praising bottoms for safewording should be the norm. And if the norm in a community is reacting negatively instead, then I don’t want that community.

Also, you can have them practice if they’re willing, like read them a list of their likes and limits and have them respond with green, yellow, red, as appropriate. There’s even an exercise you can do to improve subject agency, where you start doing something that they want, but with the expectation that they will stop you. So for example, I start talking them down into trance, but at some point they go, okay, I’m awake, I’m awake. Yellow, I’m stopping this right now. And then you praise them and then repeat and then eventually you give them the thing that they wanted, because they did in fact want it and you don’t wanna punish them by denying them that thing. But it can be a useful exercise for people who aren’t as confident in that yet.

And also, just encouraging them to tell you what could be improved, and reassuring them that their needs are valid and important. I’ve seen a lot of subs go, “oh my gosh, is my desire gross? Is it weird?” And I think, “you have a sock fetish, this is one of the most normal things. Like, you have not begun to scratch the surface of weird”. And even if you did. It’s good to tell me what you like. Because then we can craft the experience that you want, together. And if I don’t know about your sock fetish, then I’m not going to be waving socks in your face and you won’t have as good of a time. Yeah, so. That’s definitely a thing. Just reassuring and praising and yeah sometimes even getting a little bit dommy. Instructing them to have limits and to speak up about them.

[Dragontize] So yeah, bottom empowering a top to safeword. In a D/s context or in play like impact and such, a lot of it is the same thing that you do as a top for a bottom, just with a different attitude in some cases. So, reassuring the top that they’re also allowed to have limits and needs. It doesn’t make them less tough, or less dominant. Less whatever, and we want them to feel comfortable and happy, too. Asking about things like aftercare needs. Asking them what their safewords are, and if they’ve used them, when they ask you. And just again, pouring acceptance and validation on that. This is a thing that I do for my primary hypnotist partner. I’ve had to reassure him a lot that yeah, it’s okay that at first my yellow was his red, because he couldn’t stand to hurt me even by accident. And

he would just be too much in his own head about it any time that there had to be a correction. There's like, that's fine. We can stop here. We can go straight to your aftercare. I am fine. Let's do it. Or, you know, if I need space and you need something, then I can go take my space and come back to you, you know, like finding ways to meet each other's needs and just making sure that they understand. Yeah, it doesn't make you less topdy or less dominant. To be human. It's a good thing.

[Official Moose of Canada] Yeah, I was mostly gonna say similarly about asking people who are topping you what they need for aftercare. Ask them what you should be on the lookout for, notice their distress. And yeah, I've asked a hypnotist about what they needed as aftercare. "And they were like, oh my god, no one's ever asked me that before. And then they proceeded to not ask me what I needed". So that was an interesting experience. But, yeah, so asking them and it kind of depends on what the relationship is, too. As Dragontize was saying, for a person who they're in an ongoing relationship with, it's appropriate to have those ongoing conversations, like "you're allowed to have limits". Whereas maybe if you're doing pick up play, maybe you're gonna be a little bit less direct and kind of use "What are your aftercare needs?" as sort of a way of letting them know they're allowed to have aftercare needs. They're allowed to have limits and safewords, because I'm asking them what they are.

[Kat] I think, first off, I agree with everything everyone already mentioned. Let's say someone reaches out because they want a session and they are like, I don't have any limits. So they want to be a sub. Usually my first response is, so it's totally cool if we go to a tattoo parlor, and I pick out your tattoo and then you send me \$50,000? And they're like no, and I'm like so you have limits, let's start there. And like say you have limits like let's start there. And that generally works well to get people to realize that "no limits" can mean a lot of different things. And there's some people out there, well, they will fully take advantage of no limits. You know, sometimes a Dom will come to me and say I have no limits and I expect you not to have any either. So usually my first thing to do is say. Cool. So how about later I tie you up and then you can like give me a massage and maybe I can top you. And they're like, no, like I'm a Dom. And I'm like, you don't have any limits. You didn't mention anything about switch play. And like generally just by being harsh and confrontational where someone has reached out to inquire about a session and mentioned no limits, it's helpful to quickly communicate that limits matter, that people have them, and then that gets that discussion rolling for me. And then of course all the things other people mentioned, like praise and encouraging people to use their safewords, and to communicate their limits. But if somebody is just coming to me with "I have none", then that's the best way I found to get people very passionate about discussing these things that they don't want to do, which I love. Like I wanna know.

[Daja] For me, I found that “hey, if you safeword, does that change your aftercare needs?” is also a really good question to ask them. Because for some people it does. But also talking with a hypnotist, I like reassuring them “hey if you have to stop the scene in the middle I know how to wake myself up, cancel suggestions and all of that. I am capable of doing that”. And that just takes some of the pressure off them, if they need to safeword, then they don’t have to manage the end of the scene and manage getting my head back in the right space. I can handle that. You focus on you, give me a minute and then we’ll go from there. This has really helped on that end.

10. How can we support our playpartner if we think they should safeword?

[Daja] Ask for a color. If they're not using color safewords, then asking for a color doesn't work, but you can say “where are you at? Do you need anything?” You know, something like that, depending on the tone of the scene. You know, “Tell me what you're feeling”, if you're more of the toppy one in a situation, making it a command that they tell you what's going on in their head can help. So, those are my big ones there. In the middle of a scene.

[Official Moose of Canada] As you said, honestly, just making sure that we're checking in with them. Especially if you can see something in their face. And you think that's a look that either I know what that means or I don't know what that means. Like “Hey, you're making a face with Let's talk about that.”

[Mazirian] I'm happy with Daja's answer, too. Check-ins that give space for the safeword, right? Like if they're feeling reluctant about it and you're saying “Give me a color.” You're giving them the opportunity to tell you what they were thinking about.

[Kat] I would agree with everyone else. I think everyone mentioned really good things.

[Dragontize] You safe word because you don't wanna push it any farther so if they're saying, let's continue, but you can tell that there's a giant welt rising there already, and you don't want to hit that welt again. You don't have to. You're also allowed to safeword. Because of what you're thinking about them.

[Daja] Same thing for me. It's having them check in if you see something off. Making sure I know it's okay to tell them what's going on in my head. Or prompting that if I'm just in a head space where I'm too passive to initiate.

11. What support would we want as tops and bottoms if we are not safewording but should?

[Dragontize] So for me, it's a lot of reassurance on past situations. Because I have beat myself up a lot about like, wow, that could have gone so much better if

I had just spoken up. So I think just reassurance, acceptance, validation. Forgiveness is kind of a fraught word. But reassurance that we can give up all hope of a better past. That we are going to move forward. With acceptance and understanding, like yeah, there were times that I should have and I didn't, but this is a new time. Let's approach this one as its own thing.

12. How can we recover from an instance of someone not safewording when they should have, both individually and in a relationship?

[Daja] A big one is talking out why, for me at least, again, you might have noticed. I like why. Why is a favorite of mine. I'm a scientist, that comes with a territory. Why didn't I or they safeword and what check-in steps, etc, can we put into place to address that in the future. Corrective action, preventive action is what we call it in the industry. What's the preventative actions here? The cause analysis. Come on, guys. And that's just me being me. And like I said, I'm a scientist, that comes with the territory. But still. So if it's, "oh, I just haven't practiced safewording in trance and getting my brain to be able to do that when I'm super passive". Okay, well that's when we do that exercise Dragontize was talking about earlier. The, set up a situation where I'm expected to safeword. What if it's "I didn't realize that this was going to be an issue until it was"? That's a harder one to preventive-action it, but, you know, okay, why was it an issue and we have that conversation to just make that safer situation when it comes up in the future. And all of that just helps build trust. And for me, a partner who's willing to talk with me about why they felt they couldn't safeword. And work with me to find ways to improve that in the future. This helps me build the trust that they still feel comfortable talking to me if something goes wrong. It's just a question of can they now, can we now shift it so they do it before something happens rather than after?

[Official Moose of Canada] How we recover from those things does in a lot of ways depend on the why. One thing that I think is fairly universal though, is to remind, especially if we were the ones who didn't safeword, to remind ourselves and to validate that there was a reason that we didn't. Even if we don't know what that reason is, we can still remind ourselves that there was 100% some reason that we didn't. And so even if, you know, we might conclude that not safewording was not the correct response to that reason. We can still validate ourselves, that we did that for a reason. Because it's not something that we can necessarily address if we're feeling a lot of shame around it. This is kind of my therapist hat coming out. Ultimately, there's three categories of reasons why we might not safeword. Something to do with our partner. Something to do with the relationship. Or something to do with ourselves internally. And so getting a sense of which category it is can be really helpful. Just in terms of guiding that process. I think that's a little bit going into detail that is kind of beyond the scope here. Just the other thing that I would say is if it's a person you intend to play with again. At

some point. It's really, really, really important to bring them into the loop about what happened. About what was happening that you should have safeworded and also why you didn't. If you know or if maybe they are able to help you figure out the why, but either way, if there is something that you should have safeworded, and you didn't. If you do intend to play with that person again, it's really important at least that they are made aware of whatever the thing is. Whether you knew that it was a thing ahead of time or not.

[Kat] Everyone else gave a lot of really great information and I just want to second everything everyone else said, but also to say to be patient and to continue to create the space for those conversations to happen. I feel that sometimes people feel they're an inconvenience or that talking about this thing is an inconvenience. So it's easier just not to talk about it. So it's good to establish a time to talk about something, so you know that you both have a time to talk about this thing. To show compassion and try to really see things from where somebody was and not to blame yourself for not noticing signs or something else because self compassion is also very important in those situations and, Dom Drop sucks. So it's really important to nurture yourself and take care of yourself. If that happens and you're dom, and your sub is having regrets or is upset or experiences trauma response.

[Dragontize] For me, I tend to take too much responsibility on myself. So there's a process and I know this phrase gets thrown around in ways that it shouldn't be, but restorative justice, when done properly, involves a step where you figure out how each person could have taken responsibility, or where their responsibility lied. What responsibility they can take to restore whatever can be restored. So. In a situation where I didn't safeword, a lot of that is for me, at least letting go of some of the responsibility and noting like, Okay, well. Like I said about that situation earlier, he could have checked in. In the first situation with the harem scene. The hypnotist did almost no negotiation with me. Like, everything up to that point had been implicit opt out consent. Like he would just go for something and either I would go along or I would safeword and that was wildly inappropriate for my experience level at the time, and it's good to look back on that now and say, "oh wow, this guy was taking some intense risks just because he didn't feel like taking the level of responsibility he needed to. I'm kind of glad I don't play with that guy anymore". While also saying, "okay, and in that situation, my level of responsibility is to go ahead and say yellow". And if they wind up saying that I spoiled the fun or whatever, that's going to be on them, and that will be their responsibility to deal with. Because the right thing for me to do in that situation is to speak up. So yeah, just finding what I can learn from the past, what I can do differently, but also not taking more on myself than is appropriate.

Resources:

<https://submissiveguide.com/safety.%20fundamentals/series/series-safewords>

<https://kinklovers.com/bdsm-dating-tips/safe-words-in-bdsm-play/>

<https://bdsmwiki.info/Safeword>