

Meeting Discussion Framework: Vetting Play Partners

The purpose of this document is to provide a framework to CUFF board members or designated presenters to host a CUFF meeting discussion on the process of vetting potential play partners.

Although inadequately vetting a play partner can have serious consequences, we feel that the discussion should have a tone of levity while being engaging and informative; we don't want to traumatize people with a sense of doom and gloom but rather increase their risk awareness.

The discussion should start with a brief introduction. After that, there will be a series of dialog-skits. After the "actors" complete each skit, there should be a period of audience participation where participants respond to the question, "What was wrong with this picture?" In this document, the items in the "Skit Takeaways" section are *not* meant to be read through by the presenters. Rather, it is hoped that audience members will hit upon these items after having seen the skit. Instead, if the audience is particularly shy, you could maybe toss out an item to get the ball rolling, or if discussion has dried up and some items have been missed, run through the remaining items before moving on to the next skit. After all dialog-skit/audience participation segments have been completed, wrap up with a quick summary.

Introduction

- Spanking. Bondage. Fire play. Humiliation. BDSM play is intimate stuff.
- We put a lot of trust into the people we play with.
- Yet our strong desire to do this stuff may lead to playing with someone we don't really know all that well:
 - Some people are predators (but they may come across as caring and experienced)
 - Some people may be insensitive or uncaring
 - Some people may simply be inexperienced
- The purpose of this discussion is to increase your level of risk-awareness, to get you to think more about the people you play with (Potential Play Partners, or PPPs) and strategies to avoid common pitfalls that might put you into a situation that could lead to a bad experience.
- We're going to present a series of skit-dialogs. The skits are meant to be humorous, but do realize we're dealing with a serious subject which may trigger trauma for some.

- After each skit, we're going to ask, "what's wrong with this picture?" and ask for audience participation.
- Keep in mind that each of you has a unique risk profile; take the suggestions from the discussion that work for you.
- For a detailed written document, see <https://www.cuff-va.com/vetting>.

Skit 1

Two people at a munch set up a play date.

A	Oh, hey! You're CuriousNewbie, right? I overheard you saying you are interested in trying some rope?
B	Yeah, I've been reading a lot, and looking at rope photos on Fetlife. But I don't really have any experience myself yet.
A	Oh, check out some of these pictures of my work! [pull out phone and shows pics]
B	Wow, that's really impressive!
A	Yeah, I know. I've actually taught a lot of classes! I just did an online class in suspension.
B	Wow, that's so cool! Do you think you could suspend me?!
A	Oh, definitely. You should come to my house this week! I have hard points set up, and my partner is not at home.
B	Well, I'm not sure I should be coming to your house just yet. I don't really know you.
A	Oh, you don't need to worry about that! I am totally safe! And I LOVE playing with newbies! Particularly fresh submissives! [rubs hands together...]
B	Well, I'm not really a submissive.
A	I thought you wanted to bottom for rope. So, of course you're a sub!
B	Maybe you're right. I don't know. I think I would like to talk to some people who have played with you before. Can you give me some contacts?
C	[butts in from the side] Hey, if you want some reference for this one, let me know. You DEFINITELY want to get some more info...
A	[quietly, once C is gone] Oh, don't listen to them. They're just jealous and always looking for drama. So, when do you want to come over to my house and try some suspension? We would take some great photos to post on Fetlife!

B	I don't think I would be comfortable with photos. Isn't that something we should negotiate?
A	Negotiation is really overrated. I like to go with the flow and see how things evolve.
B	I think I'm going to pass for now. I'm still really new and want to spend more time getting to know people.

Skit Takeaways

- Difference between vetting and negotiation
- Importance of communication
- Beware the sense of immediacy; do due diligence; keep a long-term perspective
- Red flag: Predatory behavior
- Red flag: Suggestion of immediate private play
- Red flag: Partner may be unaware of actions
- Red flag: Dismissing fellow community member's input; labeling it as "looking for drama"
- Red flag: Rushing to potentially dangerous activities without negotiation or experience
- Reg flag: Presumptions based on appearance or top/bottom status

Skit 2

One person is reaching out to another to vet a third person.

A	Hey, B! Do you have a few minutes? There's something I wanted to ask you about.
B	Sure, what's up?
A	You know SuperCutePerson, right?
B	I'm not close friends with them, but yeah, I chat with them now and then.
A	I'm thinking they might be fun to play with, because, you know...they're super cute.
B	Cool.

A	How long have you known them?
B	Five, six years maybe.
C	[Butt in ostentatiously] Hey, I heard you talking about SuperCutePerson! Aren't they super cute?
A	Uhhh...yes, but we're having a private conversation. Go away, please.
C	Sorry, I'm leaving now. [Leave]
A	So, getting back to our conversation, in the time you've known SuperCutePerson, what's their behavior been like?
B	How do you mean?
A	Do they come up to people and hug them without their consent, for example? Do they say things that are demeaning or sexist? Does anything they do seem to make people uncomfortable?
B	No, nothing like that that I've seen. They're always very respectful and polite.
A	Have you ever played with them? Or seen them play with someone else at a play party?
B	I haven't played with them, no. I saw them playing just once, a couple of years ago.
A	Did you get any bad vibes about the way they were playing?
B	No, I wasn't watching too closely, though.
A	Do you happen to remember who they were playing with? Maybe I could talk to them.
B	It was CoolKinkyPerson.
A	Okay. Thanks for your time, B.
B	No problem. THE END [Bow to audience]

A	THE END [Bow to audience]
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Skit Takeaways

- Identify people who you have noticed interacting socially with the PPP, and ask for their opinions about the PPP
- Have situational awareness and be discreet when making inquiries
- Identify people who have played with the PPP before
- Red flag: making misogynist, transphobic, homophobic, sexist, or demeaning comments
- Red flag: hugging or touching in ways that make someone uncomfortable and/or without first asking for consent

Skit 3

Two acquaintances, who might potentially play with each other in the future, are meeting for the first time in person at a coffee shop.

A	Hey D! It's so lovely to finally meet you in the flesh! [hugs and kisses their cheek]
B	[visibly uncomfortable from the unexpected touch] Um... hi. It's nice to see you too M.
A	Tsk, tsk, tsk!! That's "Sir/Daddy/Master/Mistress/Mommy/Madame" to you! The next failure to address me by title will result in a punishment. Do you understand?
B	I hear you, but I'm not comfortable using any titles right now nor do I consent to any sort of play. At this point, I think it's most important for us to simply get to know one another better.
A	Oh my... we're feeling bratty today aren't we?! No matter. I have plenty of especially fun implements to bring bratty little subs in line. Please, sit down! [Indicates chair with hand extended. They both sit down.] Guess what I just purchased from Kinky Kit's Vending the other day?!... A brand new riding crop with the most supple leather keeper.
B	Actually, riding crops aren't really my thing. And we're definitely getting ahead of ourselves here.

	How long have you been active in the scene as a top?
A	Hmmm... not one for riding crops huh? How about floggers?
B	You didn't answer my question.
A	Alright, alright, fine. If you insist, we'll talk about the boring stuff. I've been in the scene as a dominant for about a year now, but I've essentially functioned as a dominant in every facet of my life for as long as I can remember. I'm a natural.
B	Have you ever violated someone's consent?
A	No! Never! And you didn't answer my question - do you like floggers?
B	It depends on what the tails are made of and how it's thrown.
A	I bet you would look stunning bound spread eagle to the bed, face down, with flogger marks warming that delectable little ass of yours.
B	Ok, we're done here. Goodbye. [stands up and turns to leave]
A	Ending #1: WAIT!! Did I say something wrong?! Ending #2: Really? I thought you were a true sub and serious about this! I guess I was wrong.

Skit Takeaways

- Red flag: Intimate physical touch (hug/kissing cheek) without consent
- Red flag: Stating definitively that they had never violated someone's consent, even though they had just done that very thing moments ago.
- Red flag: Insisting on assuming roles of a power dynamic without having established that understanding with the other person and without their consent.
- Red flag: Deflecting/dismissive of the potential play partner's questions.
- Red flag: Referring to the process of discussing important background information as "the boring stuff."
- Red flag: Staying completely fixated on kink topics, including sexually charged language.

- Red flag: Obnoxious ego.

Skit 4

One person arrives at another person's home for a playdate and they play.

A	[Mime knocking on door] Knock, knock
B	Hey there, come on in, come on in. Welcome!
A	Thanks, hello, hello, good evening. [Mime looking around] I've never seen your home before. This is nice.
B	Thanks. I spent all afternoon cleaning; I want you to feel comfortable here. Can I get you something to drink? There's lemonade, tea, red wine, white wine, some beer...
A	Look, we've talked about this before, I don't feel comfortable with either of us drinking before playing.
B	Oh, that's right, sorry. No beer or wine then. Water, perhaps?
A	No, I'm good, thanks. I have to say I've been looking forward to this.
B	I know, me too, our first private playdate.
A	Thanks for doing the lab-style play scenes with me at those three play parties. Those were really helpful for me.
B	Good. You really do seem to want to spend a lot of time discussing things. Shall we head down to the dungeon?
A	Okay. Oh, shoot! I just remembered I forgot to tell my friend I was going to be here tonight so I could give them a call that everything was going well.
B	Don't worry about it.. I'll make sure you have a good time. It'll be fun, I promise.
A	Okay, then, I guess it's down to the dungeon [Mime walking to dungeon]
B	[Mime walking to dungeon] So there's the St. Andrew's cross. Why don't you undress

	and get yourself in position.
A	Maybe we should review first what our plan was for tonight's play.
B	Oh, right. So basically, you're going to be tied to the St. Andrew's, I'm going to spank your ass red with the crop, paddle, and flogger but not leave any long-term marks. Your safe word is "red" for emergency to stop all play, or "yellow" if you start to have an asthma attack and need your inhaler or your bum knee starts to hurt. That about cover it?
A	Yeah, I guess so.
B	Good, then get undressed and get into position.
A	[Mime undressing and standing spread-eagled against the St. Andrew's]
B	Now I'm going to bind your wrists and ankles to the cross [Mime doing so] There, all strapped in.
A	How am I going to get out of these things if there's an emergency? At the play parties there were other people and a dungeon monitor around. If something happens to you, I'm kind of stuck here.
B	Look, these are snap hooks, it's quick and easy to release you if I need to get you down quickly. Don't worry, nothing's going to happen to me. Okay, let's get started. [Mime spanking with crop, paddle, and flogger. Ham it up!]
A	Yes, ooh, yes, more, good, please, yes, yes, ooh, yeah! [Mime enjoying each spank. Ham it up!]
B	You seem to be really getting into this. You really like it, don't you?
A	Yeah, I'm feeling really good right now.
B	Good. I know you said you didn't want me to use the cane tonight, but you said that was something you would like to try sometime in the future if you were really warmed up and horny. You're feeling so good now, you want to move the future up a bit, try out the cane now? If you don't want to, we don't have to, but I thought I'd offer. I have this nice little cane for your ass... [sing-songy]

A	Yeah, I want it, give me the cane.
B	Okay, here it comes. [Mime giving strokes with the cane]
A	Ooh, ouch, ouch, yes, ouch! [Mime enjoying each stroke]
B	Okay, let me let you down now. [Mime undoing the restraints] Okay, you're released.
A	[Mime coming down from the St. Andrews and getting dressed]
B	Let's hug and do aftercare.
A	Yes, let's. THE END [Bow to audience]
B	THE END [Bow to audience]

Skit Takeaways

- Importance of safe-calls
- Call attention to risks of inadequate vetting
- Vetting is an on-going process
- Pre-play recap of what was previously negotiated
- Don't play for first time with a partner at their home if you've never visited before
- Avoid alcohol or other substance use prior to play
- Do lab-style play at play parties before playing in private
- Don't use unremovable restraints on first play date
- Red flag: forgetting previously negotiated boundaries
- Red flag: renegotiating mid-scene
- Red flag: being dismissive of partner's concerns

Summary

We hope our little skits have given you some food for thought. There is a lot of fun to be had in this lifestyle. But we all have to keep our wits about us to keep ourselves and our community safe. In regards to the former, please always remember that no matter your role in kink, you are first and foremost responsible for keeping yourself safe. You are the one that will have to live with the consequences of the play that you involve yourself in.

For a detailed written document, see <https://www.cuff-va.com/vetting>.

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