

DUNGEON DISASTERS

by John Pental

WHO AM I?

My name is John Pental. Since 2004 I have been a professional BDSM educator teaching workshops worldwide, and now work as an online coach helping kinky and neurodivergent clients work out what that means for them.

My coaching website is <https://www.johnpendal.com/>

Kink mentoring page is <http://www.leatherlondonguide.com/coach.html>

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THIS WORKSHOP

No matter how skilled you are as a BDSM player things can and will always go wrong. This class examines some of the pitfalls of kinky scenes, both emotional and physical, with tips for warning signs to look out for, ways to try and avoid a disaster, or coping strategies when the worst seems to be happening. And if you've had a perfectly accident-free kinky life so far, come laugh at a Brit who's not been as fortunate as you!

This class is not meant to be a way of excusing non-consensual behaviour. It tries to provide strategies for different situations where things go wrong by diving them into categories. I don't want anyone to think I'm doing this to be an apologist for abuse. I think we are human beings that make mistakes, and I've grouped my mistakes into themes so that we can look at ways of avoiding them.

I've found it useful to break down a BDSM scene into 5 stages:

- 1) NEGOTIATION**
- 2) WARM UP**
- 3) ESCALATION**
- 4) IMMEDIATE AFTERCARE**
- 5) CHECKING IN DAYS LATER**

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I've divided my dungeon disasters into 5 categories:

1) GENUINE ACCIDENTS

I like to read "Dungeon Emergencies and Supplies" by Jay Wiseman, be prepared as you can be. Stay calm. Also be networked in your BDSM group and make sure it includes a range of experience, because if it's happened to you it's happened to someone else before you and they'll put it in perspective. If someone tells you the mistake has happened to them it seems much smaller than the end of the world scenario you're facing.

2) DIFFERENT DEFINITIONS

When I look back at some of the situations I got into which were a mistake, often it's because we were operating under different definitions of the same word.

My favourite question now when negotiating a scene is *"what do you mean by that?"*

Assume nothing. Ask what people mean.

3) MENTAL LANDMINES/ PANIC ATTACKS

There are several reasons why someone in an SM scene might begin to panic: they might have lost trust in the abilities of the Top, perhaps intensity was increased too quickly or someone went further than they felt able to go, or maybe the scene has triggered the recall of an unhappy memory.

Anyone can be triggered in a scene. You may notice it from increased breathing, inability to speak, tears or thinking they are in another place or time (for example).

If this happens, go to aftercare immediately. Talk to the person calmly and confidently. Let them know that nothing bad is happening to them and they are safe. Remove blindfolds and anything to do with sensory deprivation. Loosen anything around their neck (even if you think it's already loose).

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If possible let them see daylight or the natural world. Wait to untie hands and feel until you know they won't strike you.

Go slow – let them sit up slowly, then stand slowly, then walk with you. Don't let them walk too soon or go anywhere alone.

Don't do a scene where any participants are going through emotional trauma/ heartbreak/ grieving.

Watch out for a BDSM player who is **UNCONSCIOUSLY BLOCKING** what's going on – may be a sign of trauma/ abuse/ bereavement that needs counselling.

Tops can hit mental landmines and/ or and use safe words too.

DON'T RELY ON SAFEWORDS. They may not be in a fit state to use them.

One way of allowing clear communication is to tell the bottom: *"You can start a sentence with any word and I know we are still in the role play. But if you start a sentence using my first name then I will assume you have something real to tell me."*

If you meet someone who wishes to play without safe words ask them how you could let them know if something is seriously wrong. Also consider how well do they know you? Could they tell the difference between your gasp of pleasure and your gasp of pain? Have they asked for your medical history? Do they know your fears, phobias, limits and previous experience? Would you trust them with the keys to your apartment? If the answers to these questions are "no" then perhaps you shouldn't engage in a heavy SM scene with them, whether or not you agree a safe word.

Always check in a few days later. If scene was unsuccessful may have flashbacks or rethink the scene. If it was positive may lead them to question other parts of their lives. This is for benefit of everyone.

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4) LACK OF EDUCATION/ NOT CHECKING YOUR SUPPLIES

Go to workshops, read up online, listen to dungeon monitors and more experienced members of your group.

Try learning in public play spaces rather than trying new things at home.

5) PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOUR/ OR DOING SOMETHING THAT INTENDS HARM

The reason I say "patterns of behaviour" is that talking about "abuse" and "abusers" makes people defensive. "Patterns of behaviour" opens up more conversations.

We struggle to hear accusations because we want bad behaviour to be easily identifiable coming from "bad people". If we admit it could come from someone we think of as "good" that is a terrifying prospect.

Patterns of behaviour means: *are you repeating the same mistakes?*

We all have scenes that go wrong, but you should learn from them. If you consistently repeat the same mistakes we should be warning other people not to play with you.

If you are into pushing limits then skilled tops who are psychopaths and sociopaths can be very exciting to play with. They will push you further than other people because they don't care about your limits. However, although the scenes are fun, there is a greater risk that aftercare will be lacking. If you get into an extremely upsetting situation they may not give a damn.

Just because someone is fun to play with doesn't mean they are right for us. The ideal is to find someone who has the skillset to be a good player, but also a good emotional match for your needs.

Find your group of people, make sure they have a range of experience and *listen when other people give you warnings*. The best way to protect yourself from playing with people who may harm you is to TAKE REFERENCES and LISTEN TO THE ANSWERS.

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RESOURCES:

For info on kink I like the pocket book "*The toybag guide to Dungeon Emergencies and Supplies*" by Jay Wiseman

Neurodivergent Practitioners Directory – a searchable database of Neurodivergent therapists, coaches and assessment services
(<https://neurodivergentpractitioners.org>)

Kink and Polyamory Aware Professionals Directory (KAP) – directory of psychotherapeutic, medical, legal and other professionals who have stated that they are knowledgeable about and sensitive to diverse expressions of sexuality. (<https://www.kaprofessionals.org>)

Pink Therapy - directory of qualified LGBTQIA+ friendly therapists and counsellors (<https://pinktherapy.com/>)

I am also available for one-to-one kink mentoring and helping neurodivergent folk work out what that means for them:

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Please ask if you have any questions.

Thanks, John

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