

Correction, Discipline & Punishment, Pt.1: Introduction



Why are discipline and punishment so prevalent in the BDSM lifestyle and culture? What makes them so widespread in use and form? We will explore this in a 3-part series on Correction, Discipline & Punishment.

My observation is that these things are not quite as prevalent in the lifestyle as popular culture makes it appear. Certainly there are aspects of the BDSM lifestyle which emphasize this, such as more strict implementations of power exchange relationships (e.g. Master/slave). However, it is more common that this activity is part of a structured scene, and not really discipline or punishment. While many things in BDSM appear to be punishment, that isn't necessarily the case, because genuinely performed punishment is something neither the Dom nor sub in a relationship will actually enjoy.

There are, however, a fair number of activities that may seem like punishment to outsiders. This post is the first out of several that will take a closer examination of Correction, Punishment, and Discipline in BDSM.

Fun vs. Not-Fun

First, let's review the differences between punishment that is play, and what isn't.

In a "FUN" scenario this could play out in a scene where the submissive has been "naughty" and might deserve a spanking,

paddling, etc. This is a type of role play, given in mock punishment, for mutual enjoyment and entertainment. This is also what popular culture often mistakes – it is an act of mischievous play, a reward of pleasurable attention by engaging in an activity that is enjoyable to both. Much more fun, versus not-fun.

Contrast this to something “NOT-FUN”. Real punishment is rarely enjoyable for either the submissive or the dominant. Punishment is a tool, used to adjust the submissive’s behavior to a more desired state or outcome. It requires effort, attention, and often consumes time that could have been spent doing something fun or enjoyable. However, instead of enjoyment, the participants are now working on something that probably could have been avoided. Definitely not-fun.

So, in actuality, many things people see in BDSM that might be considered punishment, are really scenes with role-play and sensation play. These include activities such as spanking, paddling, flogging, whipping, etc., and are normally not done as punishment. Why?

This is largely because of how it’s processed by the bottom, submissive or slave, who ENJOYS the sensation. These sensations send signals to the brain and the entire body, which often induces an altered state of consciousness or “sub-space”. Sub space is described as feeling disconnected, floating, and dream like – the result of sensory processing which stimulates the production of endorphins, serotonin, adrenaline, and other natural biochemicals in our systems that creates a dissociative high. The result is typically an experience of feeling some separation of consciousness from the body, and the concept of “now” moves to an ephemeral timeless (or all-time) state.

Correction, Discipline & Punishment



When we think about punishment, there are actually three areas to consider: Correction, Discipline, and Punishment. These are very different things, and should not be confused with one another, though at times certain techniques can cause the lines can be somewhat blurred. My hope is to help clarify where distinctions can be made.

- **Correction** – taking time out to discuss the delay in assignment, the nature of the challenge/resistance, how to get past it, setting new deadline & expectations. This requires clear communication and investment of time so you are setting the submissive for success. Correction has three main parts (1) building Awareness, (2) providing Education, (3) framing the Consequence or Outcome.
- **Discipline** – discipline focuses on a challenging task that will build or focus on a new skill for development. May include areas such as developing self-control, personal accountability, better communication, deeper understanding, etc. These usually come in form of an exercise, drills, or a challenge that is actively watched and coached by the Dominant. It may also be removal of a privilege which is providing a distraction. Discipline builds on a prior correction (which is a necessary component) and adds to it with practical and focused effort.
- **Punishment** – is often a punitive experience which is the consequence for failing to execute or obey. Ideally, however, a punishment given is meant to override the cognitive mind and speak to the subconscious or primal mind directly, usually by associating the negative behavior/action with a negative consequence. These

consequences often take the form of removal of unrelated privileges; denials of requests; subjection to discomfort, pain, humiliation; etc. This is the price or cost of disobedience, stubbornness, etc.

- **Punishment as Ordeal** – Punishment also serves as a physical start and end to a problem. When used as an Ordeal, the punishment is given to allow the subject to move on without carrying mental or emotional burden. Some subs or slaves will carry a mistake with them, invisibly beating themselves up. Others will expect a harsh punishment, and if not given, will constantly expect it “at any time”. By using punishment as an Ordeal, it can create a firm and tangible break between what happened Before and After. This allows the sub to leave the past in the past, and move forward knowing punishment is done and over with.

More will follow in the forthcoming parts of this series, where I provide a more in-depth review of each of the above.

Closing

A scene may involve role-play and punishment like activities, but the fact that those engaged in it are having fun makes this a scene, and not actually punishment. It is, at its heart, something enjoyable and desirable. Correction is something often necessary as a due part of the training process or as a relationship develops and evolves. Discipline is something that is a sort of necessary step in the case where Correction itself is not sufficient. Punishment, on the other hand, is more of a “necessary evil”.

Why call it evil? Why judge it so harshly?? Because it has been well proven that positive incentives & pleasure often have far more beneficial and longer lasting outcomes than the punitive. It’s a tool, when the incentives and rewards for pleasure aren’t working, or as a way to help relieve guilt and

move past a problem – making way for the freedom to go forward.

-Sir Vice

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