

It's a Small World After All



Not shown to scale...

Something that happens every so often is the accidental meeting of someone you know in the lifestyle in a vanilla setting, or vice versa, someone in the vanilla setting you know whom you unexpectedly encounter at a fetish event. It could be an office colleague, a neighbor, or someone from a school or place of worship. It's a small world and we are bound to have our respective worlds collide at some point. So how do you handle this? That's what we're going to explore here, with the focus on three typical "problem" scenarios:

- Seeing a vanilla person at a fetish/bdsm setting
- Seeing a fetish/bdsm person in a vanilla setting
- Seeing a fetish/bdsm stranger in a vanilla setting

This is food for thought based on common questions I've received, personal experiences, and typical scenarios for those in the lifestyle. Consider the below situations, and when these situations arise make the best decision you can...

You're Different, Like Everyone Else

It has become commonplace to assume and believe in two seemingly contradictory things. One is the belief that you are special and unique – no one else is like you and it is through your Difference that your identity lives and breathes. Case in point, consider the adage Apple had once employed: “Think Different”. The implied irony of which I had always found rather humorous: be different just like us.

The other assumption, which directly contradicts the first, is that others probably think the same as we do. This is the root of fundamental misunderstandings in how we prioritize our lives, process the world around us, identify with how words are used, and build our world views. Case in point, consider the number of times you have heard or said: “...that's NOT what I meant”. We tend to assume that our line of reasoning or feeling is what others are also experiencing.

I bring these up in order to highlight a key point – you are uniquely the same as everyone else. Meaning that everyone else ALSO believes they are unique, has their own worldview and priorities, and in that way everyone is very much the same. Similarly, while convinced we are so unique, we also expect others to often reason and feel as we do. I therefore suggest that the trick to really connecting, authentically and wholly, is to leave behind the ego of being special or different as well as removing the filters from your typical assumptions and views when you meet someone. Or to put another way:

Never assume that another's assumptions are your assumptions.

Context is Everything

Bumping into someone you know in your vanilla life while at a fetish/BDSM event usually makes most people feel either like it's a happy accident or an anxious filled moment or horror. That is of course assuming you recognized them before they recognized you. At least in the first instance you have the choice of approaching or avoiding them. In the latter instance you have little choice but to deal with the moment once they've approached.

Not recognizing someone is typical when they are out of context. It's not where you typically see them, not where you are being your "other" self. We tend to build these barriers of moments and identity with the assumption that we have separate selves. In actuality it's all one you, just a multitude of facets, any one of which might be showing at a given time.

Context is perspective, and perspective is everything – ergo context is everything. Oh yes (at a quantum level) all dogs are probably Spot. Whoops, sidetracked, sorry.

Context often serves as the barrier to a change in perspective. This barrier creates the illusion that the one facet of a person we know given a typical place or time is the whole of their being. We forget as we indulge our differences that other people are doing the same thing. That was its first mistake...

For all of our difference, others are being just as different as we are, yet never exactly in the same way.

Your Move, Highlander

Let's say you are at a munch, and you recognize someone from your neighborhood or work there. Now what? I've seen folks

react in this situation with panic or overzealous friendliness. Panic for one, because they are now worrying about the other person recognizing them, potentially outing them at work or in other uncomfortable public situations. Overzealous friendliness for another, because the a common response to vulnerability and surprise is to use a disarming tactic by closing the unknown gap, and in turn transfer the vulnerability to the other party in their sudden surprise. Sometimes, albeit rarely, it's an open gladness because they "felt" but never knew the other person was a kinkster in some way.



First off, please recall the simple yet enduring words of Douglas Adams: **Don't Panic**. Yes this other person may see you at the munch, but then again you also see them there. Ergo any possible risk of being "outed" or discovered are equally shared. Secondly, if you are considering approaching them, I urge not to (at least not right away). Consider how you might feel if you were suddenly surprised by someone in vanilla life approaching you without warning at a fetish event? It might catch you off your guard and thus feel unprepared to deal with the situation.

Consider a fetish event, even a munch, as if holy ground. If you see someone you know from your vanilla life in a

fetish/BDSM setting then keep the peace, don't stir confrontation, and give others a chance to adjust. A suggestion might be to give a knowing nod or friendly wave if eyes catch. This will help you judge whether they are ready for anything more by "leaving the door open". Such an invitation will show you welcome a chat but will not force the issue and respect their time and privacy.

When meeting out of context in such a potentially vulnerable environment, let the potential of worlds colliding remain respectfully with the other.

Accidental Outing

Little is more awkward or potentially damaging than [outing someone](#) in public. We're going to look at two scenarios: one where the other person is unknown, and one where they are a known.

The Fetish Stranger

So in this scenario we have two people, I'm going to say it's Jane and Sue, both in the midst of being their vanilla selves and running errands or such. Let's also say that both are submissive, but only Jane is wearing a collar, a nice shiny Turian ring that is screw-locked on. At some point they bump into one another at store of some sort. Poor clueless Sue exclaims, "What a great Collar! Oh my god, where did you get it!" Jane, is now feeling very uncomfortable as everyone turns to look.

Such behavior is a major breach of privacy. While Jane is proud of her status and wears it openly, it's very likely because that pride is in her relationship with her Owner. In other words, she's wearing it for herself, not for others to

pay it mind or attention. The typical advice in this situation is to nod and smile politely, but not say anything. After all, just because you share a lifestyle choice does not make you a trusted friend. That would be similar to saying that because I like a rare steak, all carnivores are my best buddies.

If something is said, I have seen a very understated or respectful acknowledgement be most appreciated. Example might be: "I rarely see such a beautiful item worn so proudly, I am glad for you." That is something to which only the two folks involved would likely understand, and perhaps pays the highest compliment without sacrificing their personal privacy. If they wish to carry on the conversation further, they can, but don't force it.



a Turian ring collar

Ultimately, always try to consider the others level of comfort and opt for discretion.

The Fetish Friend

Running into someone you know from a local munch or fetish event is not a matter of if, but rather when. It will happen, and it might surprise you more than you think because the context of where you see your friend won't be the same. Sometimes this is when folks are just out and about by themselves, with other friends, or family – same as you. As

such it's good to have a sense of when to approach, and when to leave well enough alone.

- If they are alone, say hello, but don't bring up lifestyle matters.
- If they are with friends or family, give a knowing nod or smile, but leave it at that.

Sure enough you will see them again – very likely at the next munch or event. If they feel the situation is comfortable enough to say hello, trust they will. If not its likely for no other reason than their preoccupation, privacy, or consideration of those they are with. It has no bearing on you.

Closing

There's no reason to force friendships nor press others to be "out and proud" about their lifestyle or relationship dynamic, sexuality, or whathaveyou. The lifestyle is very often about a matter of personal choice, showing respect for individuality, and tolerance for people's preferences. Ultimately this is the broader range of the word Respect.

Respecting another's choice to be out, or not, means not taking away the options for them to make that choice.

– Sir Vice

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