

Outing Someone

In my prior post on [BDSM Etiquette](#) one of the key elements I mention was respecting and preserving the Privacy of others. Largely this is to avoid outing someone and causing harm to the broader community of active participants who may get caught up in the currents. Outing, for those that may not have read the prior post, means to announce or declare someone's involvement in alternative lifestyles to others who may be or are in a vanilla (non-kink) environment.

As is the case with all of our writings, we offer information based on our experiences and research to help inform and educate. However it is by no means considered definitive, but rather offered for your consideration in your own development and journey.

What is Outing?



You told them WHAT?

Outing someone is revealing aspects or details of someone's private life, activities, or lifestyle choices without explicit consent, be that unintentionally or otherwise. It's

that simple. The term has been largely employed by the LGBT community and is often linked to matters of privacy and the potential of subsequent harm. The term has been broadly accepted and used by the BDSM community, which often considers itself highly tolerant and pan-sexually oriented. In addition the term has also been utilized by the pagan community when revealing alternative spiritual or religious beliefs to those outside their communities.

Example: unintentional “outing” could be when you see someone out at lunch with others and mentioning what a lovely collar they are wearing, or asking who their Owner is. Such a comment would likely raise unwanted attention and create problems with friends, family, or co-workers. Such matters can create significant complications in family and community life, as well as negatively impact their livelihood. Even though this may have occurred without malice, the lack of forethought and carelessness can cost someone their job, valued relationships, and their support network.

Can someone out themselves? Of course they can! I can't tell you how many times folks are yammering away on their phones and forget exactly where they are or who is around them. I've learned WAY too much about people's lives just standing in line to buy groceries or getting something from the hardware store. Another example is sending email from the wrong account – inadvertently linking their vanilla name to their BDSM activities. This can occur with address book auto-correction, distribution lists, and phones that didn't send from the preferred account properly.

What it Isn't

As described above, outing someone is the non-consensual disclosure of someone's private life details, choices, or preferences. That means sharing what you shouldn't be

sharing. However, someone knowing a personal or private detail is not outing someone unless you do something with it. Discovering your home address, where other family members live, or your place of work, is not Outing them. It may have been too much information to share early on, or to realize someone else has discovered, but the Fear of being outed is not the same as *being* outed. That fear is just the emotional messages telling you that you just over-shared, revealed too much too soon, and should be much more cautious in the future. At this point, no action can be taken other than feeling uncomfortable and working through it.

Example: I host [a munch](#) and had my office ID on my belt – I completely forgot about it. Yes I was potentially self-outing accidentally. Luckily a friend discretely mentioned it and I tucked it away and gave them my thanks. They saw something, they learned something, but they *choose* to do the right thing and neither shared it with others nor allowed the potential issue to persist. Of course, if they had instead shouted across the table “hey man you might want to put away your “WidgetsXpress” ID badge before everyone sees it!”, then they would have been party to outing me. Their choice in action would have made the matter worse and more widespread versus helping to solve the potential issue.

Real Consequences

However, there are certainly times when people take it into their own hands to destroy another person’s life. For whatever reason that may be the motive, the intentional maliciousness others possess has its own measure of risk.

Consider the 2010 high-profile case of former “Q” radio host Jian Ghomeshi of the Canadian Broadcast Company, who had claimed he was fired due to the revelations of his participation in kink and a history of assault versus

consensual BDSM activities. Six years of court battles later Mr.Ghomeshi was later acquitted of all charges (2016), much to the dismay of many Canadian women and significant criticism of the presiding justice. Regardless of ones beliefs or politics considering the trial, the serious ramifications of being outed and how impactful such an event can be on another's life should be apparent to all.

More on this particular story on:

http://www.slate.com/blogs/outward/2014/10/28/the_jian_ghomeshi_case_echoes_many_kinksters_worst_fears_being_outed_and.html

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ghomeshi-verdict-judge-neil-macdona1.3506958>

Much more recently there is the 2017 case of Larry Garfield, a major Drupal & PHP developer in the technology industry. Individuals had discovered Mr.Garfields profile of stating interest in BDSM, power exchange dynamics, and more specifically the Gorean lifestyle. This information was circulated with the intention to create hardships in personal and/or work life.

...the Drupal community erupted in anger after its leader, Dries Buytaert, asked Larry Garfield, a prominent Drupal contributor and long-time member of the Drupal and PHP communities, "to leave the Drupal project." Buytaert claims he did this "because it came to my attention that he holds views that are in opposition with the values of the Drupal project." A huge furor has erupted in response – not least because the reason clearly has much to do with Garfield's unconventional sex life.

It is worth noting that the leaked profile was on a site completely unrelated to work or his working environment. Even after the outpouring of support by other project developers and co-workers claiming his conduct showed nothing but

professionalism, he was still subject to personal judgment in an area that is still very much a taboo subject. The result: he lost his job, had bookings canceled for conferences as a speaker, and damaged professional good standing.

More on this particular story on:

<https://techcrunch.com/2017/03/26/sex-and-gor-and-open-source/>

https://www.theregister.co.uk/2017/03/29/drupal_dev_banished/

<http://reason.com/blog/2017/04/18/drupal-developer-ousted-over-kink#slide1>

There is, in fact, very little protection an individual has if an organization decides to no longer be affiliated with BDSM and kink related practices. There is tremendous risk for those that work in education, healthcare, public services and civic office. However working for any organization, public or private, often has no protection against termination with that may be deemed immoral or distasteful personal activities. Such matters can create devastating impacts on home life, family relationships, child custody, friendships, and the prospect of future employment.

Education

Certainly there have been many attempts within the community to foster a value of respect and tolerance, especially when the matter of privacy is at stake. We hear on a regular basis at lifestyle events and clubs the need for discretion, to value the sanctity of individual privacy, and to act with responsible conduct. The success of this approach requires two critical factors, that (a) the primary issue is about missing information on proper behavior and shared values of a

community, and (b) there is an inherent desire to actively demonstrate respect and kindness towards others.

However, the idea that educating people to behave properly is the end-all-be-all solution relies on a false assumption: that others will actively BE responsible. There are plenty of over emotional and psychologically unstable individuals who are sociopathic, narcissistic, or otherwise maladjusted for which the safety or considerations of others is not a priority, focus, or goal in any way, shape or form. Indeed, there seems to be an increasing trend of double-standards for many people – those that expect others to show them respect, but in no way feel obligated or required to reciprocate. We see it on the roads, in personal life, and in current political events.

Wake-Up!

The idea that everyone is trustworthy and owes you a “safe space” is idealistic delusion at best. The harsh reality of natural selection and psycho-emotional dysfunction is that no one else OWES you protection. There *should* be a mutual demonstration of respect, yes – but there is no guarantee of that. This is your wake-up call to take active role for guarding your safety and responsibility. Protecting yourself and your family is primarily your duty and responsibility, no one else's.

Similarly, the community needs to stop passively offering advice and *instead actively coach and reinforce the consequences* of violating the right to privacy. It's hard to act when details are sketchy and it turns into a “they-said/they-said” dramafest. However, when there are multiple witnesses and/or evidence through messages, emails, TXTs, etc., then the community does have the responsibility to be part of the solution, or else they will be part of the problem.

Defensive Driving

Much like learning our skills at driving, attention to education and conduct must go in two directions of effort. One must learn how to be a safe, courteous, and attentive driver to avoid putting oneself and others at risk. One must ALSO learn how to deal with the fact that not everyone will be safe, courteous and attentive and possess “defensive driving” skills to help protect you against the irresponsible and unsafe.

It is for this reason we must acknowledge that there are those who WILL seek to do harm. If we continue persist with a rather Pollyanna sense of naiveté and blind optimism, then we ourselves are in part to blame for our passivity and neglect for self-protection. This is in no way to be mistaken as shifting blame from the one intending to do harm to the victim. Rather it’s accepting that life is unfair, sometimes cruel, and there are people out there who irresponsible or unsafe. That is reality, and pretending it does not exist means not only are your survival skills going to suffer, but likely so will your relationships and financial well-being.

Allow me to put this another way. There are every day actions we normally engage in because we accept there is a certain inherent personal risk which is a matter of “When” versus “If” something bad will happen if we don’t take preventative measures. Very common cautionary steps we routinely take include brushing your teeth or getting a routine physical, fastening your seatbelt in the car, wearing a helmet when on a motorcycle or bicycle, looking both ways before crossing a street, etc. We choose caution in these instances because we acknowledge that “accidents happen” – meaning forces (or people) are beyond our control.

Why would safe guarding your private life and personal

survival be any different?

Measures

There are some measures we can collectively take to help reduce this behavior. One is to be more mindful and aware of our actions, another is to be a little less trusting without time & proof. Finally, the community needs to act together when we see it, and reinforce the idea that irresponsible behavior has definitive consequences. Much of the below many will consider common sense, but that's just throwing the problem right back at the victim. Instead, we need to support them.

To those that might out someone *unintentionally* – Pay Attention!

- **Awareness:** There is a right time and place for everything, before speaking, ask yourself, is this it, and is it now? A little forethought goes a long way. Think first before saying something.
- **Consent:** Keep others personal details to yourself, don't spread them or share without explicit consent – just because someone trusts you does not mean they trust people you know by extension.
- **Discretion:** If you do discover another's personal details which might be too intimate, too details, giving them something to worry about will only make things worse. It might be better to scrub that from your memory and forget you ever came to those realizations.
- **Learn:** If you fucked up (no matter how it happened), admit it and apologize, and do not make the same mistake again. The consequences are more important than the intentions, no matter how innocent you believe them to

be.

To those who might out someone *purposefully* – Don't Do It!

- **Choices:** Consider perhaps that the best revenge is Living Well, not ruining others' lives. After all, isn't that what we would expect to be done to us in return?
- **Respect:** Respecting privacy says much more about your maturity and nature than it does about anyone else. Outing someone shows what a vindictive or malicious ass you are.
- **Consequences:** It's a small world and word gets around FAST, especially in the BDSM community where risk and accountability are highly sensitive matters.

To those that stand risk of being outed (which is most of us) – Protect Yourself!

- **Caution:** Error on the side of caution and don't share too much personal information too soon.



Reach out & get help before it gets to this

- **Time:** Give people time to show their true colors before

being too free with valuable info; trust is earned over time and shouldn't demand blind faith.

- **Instincts:** Trust your cautionary instincts as they are often more right than not, especially when it's a matter of your survival (relationships & financial included).
- **No:** One of the greatest powers we have in a consensual lifestyle is the ability to say "No". You can walk away if you feel someone is pressuring you to reveal more than you feel comfortable.

To those that have *been a victim* of being outed – Fight It!

- **Deflate:** Try to take the oxygen out of flame wars and rumor-mills by avoiding online confrontation and getting lured into online battles.
- **Enlist:** Reach out to your support network to get the emotional bolstering you will need; fighting the consequences of being outed is a long battle that will likely require leaning on others.
- **Communicate:** Speak to the community or event leader where the matter has occurred; relate the facts of the incident so it's clear and concise without disparagements or assumptions.
- **Reporting:** Register the incident with NCSF (NCSFreedom.org) by relating the facts of the incident; this may get you some information and direction for assistance to resolve or find legal support.
- **Defend:** Outing someone is not only a type of consent violation, but a form of harassment and defamation which seeks to do real harm – You will need to fight to survive.

Closing

I acknowledge that the measures presented above are insufficient and unfulfilling. Sadly there is no real guarantee against being outed, no single way to prevent it from occurring. No one deserves to be outed, not for any reason. The act of outing someone is either an act of carelessness or vindictiveness – neither of which should be tolerated. Unfortunately there is often very little protection or recourse once you have been outed and damage has been done. The impacts from being outed are potentially devastating to all aspects of life and can send another into deep despair. Actions such as orders of protection and lawsuits for wrongful termination and child custody are long and arduous heartbreaking battles. Realizing this should motivate us to take good preventive measures and protect ourselves as best we can. Once there is a problem, you are stuck with the fight.

A little healthy paranoia can go a long way towards avoiding unnecessary strife and stress.

Sir Vice

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