

Your Kink is Not My Kink, Pt.2: Tolerance

Continued from [“Your Kink is Not My Kink, Pt.1”](#)

Learning Tolerance

Learning to become more tolerant is a practice. It requires not only sitting with one's own discomfort, but learning to look at how we engage with others. Let's walk through a few things with an example. Let's say you are talking to someone at a munch, an event, or a play party. Let's also say someone brings up a contrary opinion to your deeply personal views, or perhaps supports a lifestyle that you don't agree with. How this might play out is examined below...

Respecting Differences



Everyone has their own experiences and therefore develops differing preferences, beliefs, values, etc. When these different world views and value systems clash, we experience social and emotional tension or discomfort. It's a given that we are different, you and I, and while we just may not always see eye to eye, we should not get in one another's way when

faced with those differences. However, when we discover something which we might find unsettling or uncomfortable, leaving that something alone can be a challenge. That's where the crux of *tolerance* comes in – being able to manage one's emotions and not react out of hand.

Demonstrating tolerance is one way to show respect for another human being's experiences, needs, and feelings. Showing respect, even when we feel uncomfortable or upset, says more about ourselves and values as a human being than it does about the other person. Indeed, showing respect allows the journey to continue, and if one is so inclined, the opportunity to learn more about the other person and continue to develop a broader appreciation for both them and the world around us.

Respecting differences opens the world to us and closes the gaps between us.

React vs Respond

Reacting is Easy – it requires no thought, its immediately gratifying, and most importantly it soothes the primal panic's need to act. By reacting we give ourselves the illusion of having some control and typically deflect responsibility of our actions to someone else. Responding is by far more challenging for it requires practiced self-awareness, the ability to use self-control, and to consider a variety of potential choices. We must also be able to reflect on the consequences of our choices in the response and take responsibility for those outcomes.



Thus, the first and most critical step in practicing tolerance is learning to *Delay* taking action. Whether that's by counting to 12, taking 7 deep breaths, or "sleeping on it" – these methods are there to help us process sudden emotions and to pause before we act, allowing us time to *think*. If we can give ourselves time to *feel without acting immediately* then we are able to consider why we feel what we do, how those feelings are trying to drive us to act, and what the consequences of those actions may be. In other words, we have time to see our Choices.

Tolerating anything is an active *choice* to endure the discomfort of something we may not wish to experience. For while the tendency to react is to provide a sense of control, nothing says "you are in control" like making a conscious choice in how you respond to others despite their behavior or to your immediate emotions.

Delay gives us the ability to see our choice options in a given situation, and is the key to being able to respond versus just reacting.

Misinterpretations

Often it is our understanding or assumptions about preferences & needs that may be the issue, and not an actual gap or disagreement in preference. We each have our own understanding of the world around us, and that understanding

may not even be remotely related to that of others. What differences there may be depends on our perspectives and experiences. In the world of BDSM, this is why careful negotiation and consent is so important – there are bound to be differences in our interpretations of a label or term. The gap in common understanding is what often leads to miscommunications and false expectations.



Example: no one person handles rope in exactly the same way (or even with the same intent) so just saying “I like rope” says little to nothing. What do you like about it, what experiences or sensations, what kind of interaction? The one word label is not enough. The same can be said of any tool, implement, activity, or lifestyle.

Consequently, the disturbing differences we perceive might be completely manufactured in our own minds and therefore of our own doing. As such, it’s a good idea to follow a rule of thumb and avoid making assumptions. As we say in some martial arts practice, “cup empty”, because we can only accept and appreciate knowledge once we have made the space to receive it. Always ask how the other person understands it, what their experiences may have been, what they liked and didn’t like.

Forgoing our assumptions allows us the opportunity to come to a common ground and reduce misunderstandings

Opportunity Knocks

Practicing tolerance towards others is also an opportunity to learn and connect with another, potentially in a more authentic and profound way. The differences between what one is for/against can be viewed as a gap of perspective which opens a door to expanding our knowledge of the world. The reward is that you enrich your understanding while also acknowledging another as a fellow Human Being. As we are all subject to the human condition, we are harboring very similar basic needs: to be acknowledged, understood, appreciated, and ultimately... to be loved.

This doesn't mean you literally have to love another you can't fathom or with whom you strongly disagree. However, it's good to be able to Respect their "being-ness" by at least seeing they have similar needs (albeit manifested differently) and to try to connect through acknowledgement and understanding, if nothing else.

The other opportunity practicing tolerance provides, is furthering our own self-awareness. A little internal reflection (i.e. Introspection, not dwelling) is another door to widening the world but this time it's the world within us. Introspection, especially after an experience that stimulates intense feelings, can give us insight as to what our underlying needs are, the priorities we have, and whether our choices and actions are aligned with our values and goals. When next presented with something that provokes strong emotions, ask yourself these questions:

- What do my Feelings say about me?
- Will my Actions creating desirable consequences?
- Is there a way can I learn & grow from this?

- Can I find a way to connect & value the other?

Choosing to Connecting Emotionally, or Not

There are many schools of thought regarding how far one should extend themselves into another person's experiences. One can, for example, seek to understand another's choices or views as an intellectual or academic pursuit. Another way is to connect intimately and feel that person's experiences as their own. Other's will feel motivated to act to correct or alleviate another's emotional experience.



Any degree of emotional connection is a matter of choice, and there are good reasons on both sides of the coin. If we refuse to connect emotionally we cannot experience rich relationships with others, cannot expand our understanding of the world, and will often resort to fixed and ridged views that hinder our own ability to adapt and survive. However, when we choose to connect we solve these matters, but are also faced with the challenge of spending emotional reserves that we may need, experiencing guilt at our inability to solve all the pain and problems around us, and potentially losing ourselves in the tempest of the human experience.

However, we can always choose to show *respect* without any of these down-sides. One can show respect to another by acknowledging they are as much deserving of their views and

beliefs as anyone else. I can experience sympathy for their situation or feelings; I can respect an individual's way of living, mode of conduct and behavior; I can disagree but choose not to act in a fashion that demeans, diminishes, or inhibits their own choices. I can do all this without their choices being a choice I would make myself or even agree with... One can demonstrate tolerance without agreement and without having to make someone else's experience their own.

Neither of us are beholden to like, accept, or agree with one another – it's a Choice.

Closing a Door with Tact

Whether we like it or not, there is an impact to our choice in words. If everything above has been followed, and there is still a gap which cannot be bridged in some way, then it's completely reasonable to close that door to that connection. There are, however, more constructive ways of going about it. Personally I feel there is a key problem with "your kink is not my kink, and that's okay." The nature of that problem is a certain inherent judgmentalism on a few fronts.

1. **Declarative:** *Your kink...*

Implies that one is assigning the kink, or at least their understanding of it, to the other – which can create a defensive response.

2. **Judging:** *...is not my kink...*

Furthers the demarcation of difference between people – widening the gap versus opening the opportunity for understanding.

3. **Responsibility Shifting:** *...and that's okay.*

After making a declarative judgment (which likely makes the other feel uneasy) it's now an assumed responsibility to make them feel good about themselves

again or somehow provide approval.

Perhaps I'm being overly picky, but it's fairly well established that Words and Thought are absolutely linked (i.e. language and cognition). In particular there is interesting research on linguistics and cognition that shows how words influences our ability describe the relationships and context. That can be an attempt to appreciate the difference between objects in space (be that absolute or relativistic), between social interactions, and the sequence of cause and effect (causal chain). There is nothing wrong with being reasonably attentive to our choice in language – after all that's how we typically interact. Its enough to say something may not be for you, but are curious to learn what they enjoy about something. This states a boundary AND offers the opportunity to understand the other. Or, simply say “no thank you, that's not for me.”

Language leads thought, and thoughts are revealed in our language.

Own That Which is Yours

Mutual accountability is a necessary element of forming connections and relationships – at least if we believe that our interactions are not a zero-sum game of competition. It is only through a shared dynamic that interaction and connection can provide mutual satisfaction. Part of this includes owning that which is yours, and neither foisting upon another nor taking from another respective responsibilities. Meaning, we can disagree AND treat one another with civility, respect, and non-interference. That *also* means that if we don't agree, it's neither of our responsibility to make the other feel better about it. You should not have the burden of making me feel better, accepted, understood, or even comfortable – that is my

responsibility.

IF you wish to go out of your way to help me feel accepted, understood, etc., then that is commendable but you don't HAVE to. Demonstrating mutual respect and tolerance can really be boiled down into two salient points:

- Someone's choices, preferences, or beliefs are a matter of THEIR choice
- How I process the experience of experiencing their choice (how I feel/act) is MY responsibility
- The way WE engage and interact (from start to finish) is OUR responsibility

I can practice tolerance as an individual, but it doesn't work as a culture or society if it's not mutually practiced and reciprocated. If you wish to be respected you must also be willing to show respect to others. If you wish your choices to be tolerated, you also have to tolerate the choices of others. This is inordinately difficult to do and, as a society that is constantly trying to impose change according to conflicting values, neigh impossible.

Successfully practicing tolerance resides in mutuality & reciprocity

Closing Thought

I am not a white-light crystal-sucking twinkie, very far from it – I don't believe in light and love for everyone. I do however hold to the principle of seeing life as a way to learn, grow, evolve, and strive for the best within myself.

That said, nothing is as easy or simple as we'd like, and upholding that principle can be a challenge at times. However, anything done well requires time and effort in order to build a proficiency, and then one must then seek to

constantly improve and evolve. So though I may not always succeed all the time, I acknowledge that anything involving self-awareness is a Practice. Learning tolerance and how to manage the discomfort that comes with it is no different. The key is to remember that tolerance is a matter of Choice, and to see something which is challenging to us as an opportunity for development. Even if we may never master those skills completely, we do improve, and that its worth the effort.

-Sir Vice

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Resources

Fine, Cordelia (2006), *A Mind of its Own: how your brain distorts and deceives*, Cambridge, UK: Icon books, ISBN 1-84046-678-2, OCLC 60668289

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Leavitt, Fred (2015), *Dancing with Absurdity: Your Most Cherished Beliefs (and All Your Others) are Probably Wrong*, Peter Lang Publishers

A Herskovits (1997), Spatial and Temporal Reasoning: Language, spatial cognition, and Vision

Neel Burton M.D. (2015), Empathy Vs Sympathy: Sympathy and empathy often lead to each other, but not always.
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/hide-and-peek/201505/empathy-vs-sympathy>

Amygdala activity may represent the generation of emotional experience itself, and/or it may reflect sundry aspects of emotional information processing correlated with emotional experience.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2555454/>

There are a number of factors that must be considered in contemplating the interplay between adverse environmental stimulation, stress responses/reactions, and pathology.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3182008/>

Smaller hippocampal volumes are well established in posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), but the relatively few studies of amygdala volume in PTSD have produced equivocal results.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3647246/>

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