

Protocols (pt3) – Modalities

In a prior article I provided an [introduction to the use of Protocols](#). In this post I will continue examining their use by looking at the different types of protocols expressed as a modality. To review briefly, what are protocols? Generally speaking, they are the accepted methods or standards of how/why to do something. Examples include diplomatic or social



etiquette, medical procedural treatments, computer network communications, etc. For the sake of the lifestyle, protocols are a way things are done to reinforce or express the power exchange dynamic between the Dominant and the submissive.

As per usual, the below is based on my experience, personal thoughts, and observations. It is in no way meant to be singularly definitive or absolute, but merely provide those interested in exploring power exchange with ideas they may evaluate for themselves.

Modes of Protocols

Protocols are designed to be highly specific, and usually only address one area or item of execution. For example, how to address someone (such as the subs Owner), how to speak, what clothing to wear, how to approach or withdraw, etc. They are situational, prescribing different actions according to the appropriate context. We can group situations in terms of common situation or setting – and we call these situational groupings protocol “Modes”.

A Mode of protocol distinguishes when you are either stepping

up, or pulling back from, the default or baseline behavioral standards. It is the Thematic guideline that helps determine which behavior is appropriate or expected. In general, these variations can be clustered into groups that are “close enough” to fall into similar categories. For example, there may modes which describe behavior for D/s Formals, BDSM events, private time, every-day family interaction, coworker or family visits, etc.

These Modes should be clear enough to have distinct reason and purpose, concise enough to be remembered, and not so numerous as to get confusing. Let’s say, for example, there are three modes of protocols – Low, Medium, and High. Family and professional interaction might fall into a “Low” protocol mode, while private time and D/s Formals might be “High” protocol.

Purpose

The formality of protocols are meant to guide the mind to Living the Idea, not just thinking about it. It takes all these conceptual ideas about submission, service, obedience, dedication/devotion, etc., and makes it a “way of being”. Over time, this has the effect of conditioning the submissive to the ideas through execution. This is one reason why obedience is so highly valued, comfort in submission comes through practice over time. Let’s dive into these a little bit individually.

Low Protocol – a relaxed modality

How does a normal D/s protocol differ from a low protocol? Low Protocols are more relaxed and employed for situations where subtlety and more personal agency is required, such as family gatherings or being out in the general public. The goal is to relax the control so individuals can focus on obeying the spirit of the law, rather than the precise word

of law. A family gatherings and work scenarios might be easily understood. If you were to behave in strict fashion, it would probably do more than just raise eyebrows. But what about attending a Munch? For some, a munch may tend to fall into the low protocol because of its casual and vanilla setting, which needs to remain suitable for public situations and less intimidating to those new to the community.

KEY: low level protocols should be as close to as feeling “natural” for the sub – combining personal agency with power exchange elements or reminders.

Examples: using code words or silent commands; sitting on furniture without permission; able to eat/drink without waiting for explicit permission.

Medium Protocol – default/normal modality

Medium protocols are your “Normal” power exchange habits and methods as dictated by a series of guidelines for daily behavior. The key is that the rules need to be successful in creating the desired effect. For example, if your goal is keeping your floors clean, a common or daily protocol might be something like *“removing shoes before stepping 3 feet beyond the threshold of an exterior entrance”*. If you want clean floors AND develop greater control, then you add an appropriate elements of requesting permission to enter, kneeling, removing shoes, etc.

KEY: medium level protocols need to be “right sized” between effectiveness and complexity, yet reinforces the dynamic of Control and Obedience.

Examples: the sub/slave calling their owner Master or Mistress; asking permission before withdrawing from the room; kneeling when at rest

High Protocol – formal/strict modality



How does a normal D/s protocol differ from a high protocol? High Protocols are often more formal and reserved for something special. High protocols are used where (1) the circumstances are highly specific (e.g. high tea service); (2) they tend to require far more attention to detail and control; and (3) are more demanding in expectation and precise in structure (thus require more training and practice).

In the prior example of removing ones shoes a High Protocol seeks to leave nothing to assumption. It either builds upon the normal Medium protocol (ideally), or defines it from the ground up. Using the *“removing shoes”* example from the Medium/Normal Protocol section, in High Protocol one specifies precise type of shoe (no less than 3” heels); entering the must be preceded by the request for permission to enter; and then sub would typically assume a waiting posture (typically kneeling) immediately after removing their shoes.

KEY: High level protocols should be special, formal, and “ritualistic” in order to create a moment that strikes out in the mind of the sub.

Examples: upon hearing the bell rung thrice the submissive approaches the Dominant from the side to the right, kneels down in obeisance, rises to kneeling upright, and requests to serve. Typically a formal or dress collar is worn, and other matters of dress, hair, makeup, and accessories are clearly articulated and expected without fail.

Standards

The reason there are no standards is that everyone is different. Protocols need to be customized, tailored, and made with the Outcome in mind. This is why studying multiple sources and evaluating their approach is so important. There is no “One True Way” and also much to be gained by seeing how people solve difference challenges or tune things to their needs.

One must also have sensibility in terms of physical abilities, time or financial constraints, and personal choices – these are all factors. Example: if the outcome is about building control and grace – then putting the submissive in a position where they are very likely to fall over does not help but rather only serves to hurt physically (sprain), mentally (a failure), and emotionally (insecurity/desirability).

Responsible Dominance

If such a thing arises where the sub cannot succeed, it is the Dominants fault. They are the one that has to build a protocol that is not only geared to the desired outcome/purpose, but also for *Success*. You cannot design a protocol which nearly guarantees a subs failure unless they perform something “Perfectly” – which often means inhumanly or contrary to the physical person they actually are. This further implies that, when you are exploring Protocols, you can’t go from 0-100 in 60 seconds. You need to allow for time to learn, adjust, grow, and progress.

Example: Dining

In a normal dining protocol the sub may have default permission to dine with their Dominant, but they do have to wait for permission to sit, and wait for permission to begin eating. This is to ensure their owner/Dom needs nothing else before they dine.

In a High Protocol format – the sub may be expected to eat before (earlier in the day) or after the owner/Dom has been served and completed the meal. Very often the submissive would not sit at the table at all, but rather kneel or floor sit beside their owner attending to needs or requests. In a more Victorian service model, the submissive may be waiting along the walls of the dining room or in the kitchen until called.

Furthermore, in normal protocol the food may be placed on the table in a “family style” serving – while in High Protocol each plate is prepared separately and completely in the kitchen and brought to the table for the owner to enjoy.

Transitioning

High Protocol usually starts from the position of most formal, strict, and power exchange oriented. It's also the most challenging and difficult to perform or maintain. The value of starting your planning from a high protocol state is you get define your destination for the journey ahead.

If you start from a position of Purity, recognizing that it may be used few and far between, you adjust or compromise to make things more livable, reasonable, and useable. If starting from that place of purity of idea you can see your end state, and then judge how far away you are getting from what it is you desire.

Compromise too much, and you lose the feel, fun, and dynamic. Don't compromise at all, and you risk either never using it,

or having some very awkward moments that will cause unwanted attention or drama in your family/work relationships. Remember that you don't have to do everything, perfectly, right away, and all at once.

There is NO such thing as perfect, though we may strive...

-Sir Vice

Copyright 2018 Limits Unleashed